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Billboard Power 100

2023

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WMG's *Voices of Change* Initiative

In 2021, we started donating ad space in *Billboard* to amplify the voices of activists, organizations, and charities that reflect our core values and are creating real change.

We're proud to continue our partnership with MusiCares. Their efforts to provide critical assistance and to support the music community have reverberated through times of crisis.

Congratulations to our *Billboard* Power 100 honorees, leaders in every way.

CONGRATULATIONS

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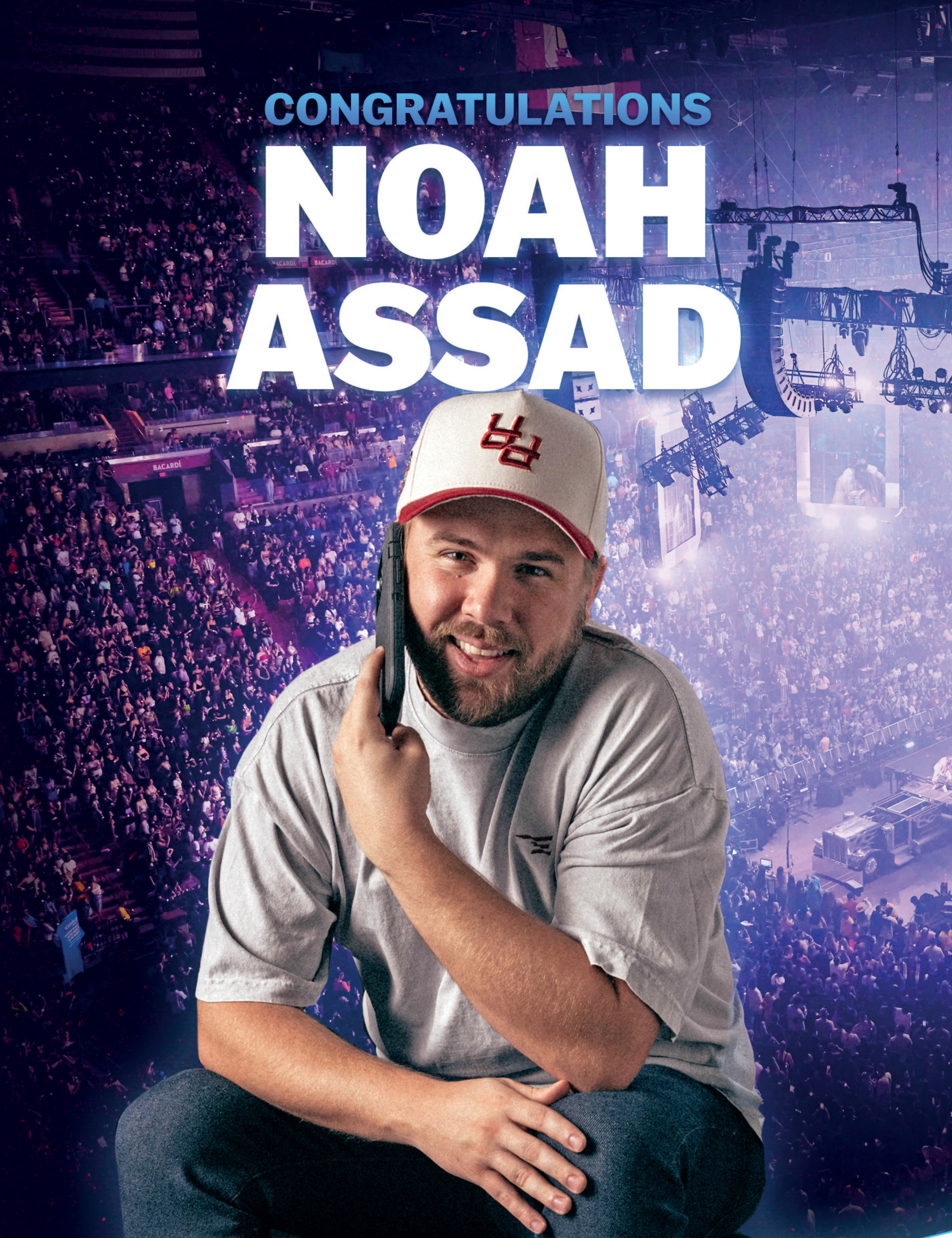

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ADDICTION DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS THE MUSIC INDUSTRY. LET'S REWRITE THAT.

It's the close of Dry January, and many people kicked off 2023 sober. Whether you choose to abstain from alcohol and drugs or not, you've likely seen first-hand how addiction disproportionately affects those of us in the music industry. In fact, 56% of music industry professionals cite problematic substance use[1] and 34% of touring professionals report suffering from clinical levels of depression as compared with just 7% of the general population.[2]

But wellness is not a one-month trend. And those who are struggling with addiction have so much to offer. So we are uniting in support of our artists, talent, teams, crews, and fans – not just for one month, but year-round, year after year. We are calling on our peers in the music industry and our allies across the country to unite as a community – a community we call 1 Million Strong – to destigmatize addiction and to support recovery, so people are empowered to live their best lives.

We're taking action to transform the way people think about addiction by supporting new ways for sober fans to enjoy shows, ensuring touring musicians and crews have access to resources on the road, and engaging in conversations about sobriety that are free from shame and stigma and full of possibilities. We believe community is core to recovery, that sobriety doesn't have to be isolating, that those of us who don't have challenges with substance use are well-positioned to be a community of support for those who do.

Together we're on a path where recovery means gaining so much more in life.

Starting now, we can expand music culture to include sobriety – a shift that supports health and wellness, not just sex, drugs and rock 'n roll. As it has throughout history, music can once again be a catalytic force for positive change. Join us as we come together to support those in recovery: 1MillionStrong.com/letter.

"As someone who has seen first-hand how devastating substance abuse can be for creatives, I fully support the 1 Million Strong initiative."

MIKKEL ERIKSEN
Stargate

"The health and wellness of our music industry colleagues and fans alike is critical. I believe by spreading the word through SPIN platforms, we can drive people to take action and truly improve society by assisting those who need help."

JIMMY HUTCHESON
CEO, SPIN

"The music industry leads the pack when it comes to influencing what is cool. Unfortunately, a lot of destructive behaviors are celebrated! This harms artists and audiences. But the same power can be used to help and heal!"

DARRYL "DMC" McDANIELS
Artist

HEAR FROM OUR SUPPORTERS AT 1MILLIONSTRONG.COM/LETTER

1 MILLION STRONG

WE ARE #1MILLIONSTRONG

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[1] Source: Musicians Behavioral Health Research Summary, A partnership between Send Me a Friend and Tulane University School of Social Work and [2] Source: White-Paper-Dr.-Chayim-Newman-Zack-Borer.pdf (borernewman.com)

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Singer-Songwriter

Jeremy Sirota
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1 MILLION STRONG
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
BELIEVE IN PEOPLE
SHATTER THE STIGMA

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JEFF BECK

1944–2023

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billboard POWER 100 2023

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

AND… WE'RE BACK. Masks are off, Grammy parties are on, and the definitive list of the most powerful players in the music industry returns, in all of its ultracompetitive glory. This year, once again, we're celebrating only the top 100 most influential leaders and teams in the business (and yes, we know, infuriating everyone else).

Given the music industry's mind-boggling growth since *Billboard* launched the Power 100 list over a decade ago, the fight to get on 2023's lineup was by far the fiercest ever. Scores of powerful music executives weren't included, even though they are forces to be reckoned with. This year, we decided to focus on sheer power wielded over the past 12 months rather than also celebrating leaders, as we did for the past few years, for fostering diversity, inclusion, social justice and more caring corporate cultures. While we spotlighted many of these important efforts on expanded power lists throughout the pandemic — and we will continue to recognize these essential initiatives in our coverage and at our events throughout the year — we wanted to take a harder look with this list at the industry's power centers, partly to see how much these efforts have reshaped music's top ranks.

To do this, our industry reporters, editors and analysts deliberated and debated for months, sifting through all the information we could find, speaking with insiders and weighing data like revenue, market share and growth alongside the impact of groundbreaking deals and decisions.

The competition for next year's list will no doubt be just as stiff, but here's the good news for anyone looking to crack it: While the latest Power 100 is certainly a formidable group, it's clear from our interviews with them that they could use some help navigating the challenges ahead. Next year's list is wide open to the visionary who can figure out how to break a new artist or create a global hit in a world where thousands of new songs flood the market each day. The executives named here would love to toast the innovator who can outsmart the bots buying up all the concert tickets, the touring genius who can grow profits in the face of high inflation and supply shortages, and the problem-solver who can tackle the fake streams robbing real artists of revenue.

We make this list to motivate the music industry's progress — we promise it's not an elaborate scheme to torture publicists over the holidays! — and we look forward to recognizing a diverse new group of thinkers, movers and shakers in the years to come.

Hannah Karp
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

KARP: DAVID NEEDLEMAN

TYPE ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN NAUMANN

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Steve Boom, Ryan Redington,

and

Rishi Mirchandani

on their selection to Billboard's 2023 Power 100 List

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PRESENTS

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PRESENTS

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2022

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09.13 MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
NEW YORK

09.14 CAPITAL ONE ARENA
WASHINGTO

09.15 BAR
BRO

09.17 BELL
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TORONTO

09.20 SPECTRUM CENTER
CHARLOTTE

09.22 FTX ARENA
MIAMI

09.23 FTX ARENA
MIAMI

09.24 AMWAY CENTER
ORLANDO

09.25 AMALIE ARENA
TAMPA

09.27 STATE FARM ARENA
ATLANTA

09.29 TO

NTER
STIN

10.05 AMERICAN AIRLINES CENTER
DALLAS

10.07 T-MOBILE CENTER
KANSAS CITY

10.09 BALL ARENA
DENVER

10.11 FOOTPRINT CENTER
PHOENIX

10.14 T-MOBILE ARENA
LAS VEGAS

10.15 HONDA CENTER
ANAHEIM

10.16 PEC NGA ARENA SAN DIEGO
EGO

N 1 CENTER
MENTO

ENTER
N FRANCISCO

.21 CRYPTO.COM ARENA
LOS ANGELES

10.22 CRYPTO.COM ARENA
LOS ANGELES

10.25 SAVE MART CENTER
FRESNO

10.27 MODA CENTER
PORTLAND

10.28 CLIMATE PLEDGE ARENA
SEATTLE

10.29 ROGERS ARENA
VANCOUVER

11.02 TD GARDEN
BOSTON

#1 BILLBOARD HOT 100 LABEL republic records 2012
#1 BILLBOARD HOT 100 LABEL republic records 2014
#1 BILLBOARD HOT 100 LABEL republic records 2015
#1 BILLBOARD HOT 100 LABEL republic records 2016
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#1 BILLBOARD HOT 100 LABEL republic records 2018
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#1 BILLBOARD HOT 100 LABEL republic records 2021
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DATA FOR WEEK OF 2.04.2023

SZA's *SOS* Scores Seventh Week At No. 1

SZA'S *SOS* ADDS a seventh week at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 (dated Feb. 4), all dating to its debut. With its continued command, the set is the first R&B album to spend its first seven weeks at the summit in over 35 years. The last to do so was Whitney Houston's *Whitney*, which soared in at No. 1 on the June 27, 1987-dated list and ran up 11 weeks on top, all from its debut.

SOS earned 111,000 equivalent album units Jan. 20-26, according to Luminate, and has tallied 1.8 million units to date.

SOS is SZA's second studio album, released over five years after the June 2017 arrival of *Ctrl*, which debuted and peaked at No. 3 on the Billboard 200. It has since earned 4 million units and has yet to leave the weekly ranking, where it climbs 20-16 after 294 consecutive weeks.

On the Billboard Hot 100, all 23 *SOS* tracks have charted, led by "Kill Bill" — which holds at its No. 2 high, SZA's career-best rank. The song and the set's "Nobody Gets Me" (No. 10 peak in December) have upped her count to seven total top 10s.

"Our core loves this album, and these two singles feel like they're strongly leading the way," says WBBM-FM (B96) Chicago assistant program director/music director Erik Bradley. "Add to that the launch of SZA's tour [set for Feb. 21], and it just feels like everything is teed up for a major 2023 win for her."

—KEITH CAULFIELD AND GARY TRUST

BILLBOARD 200

1

SOS

SZA

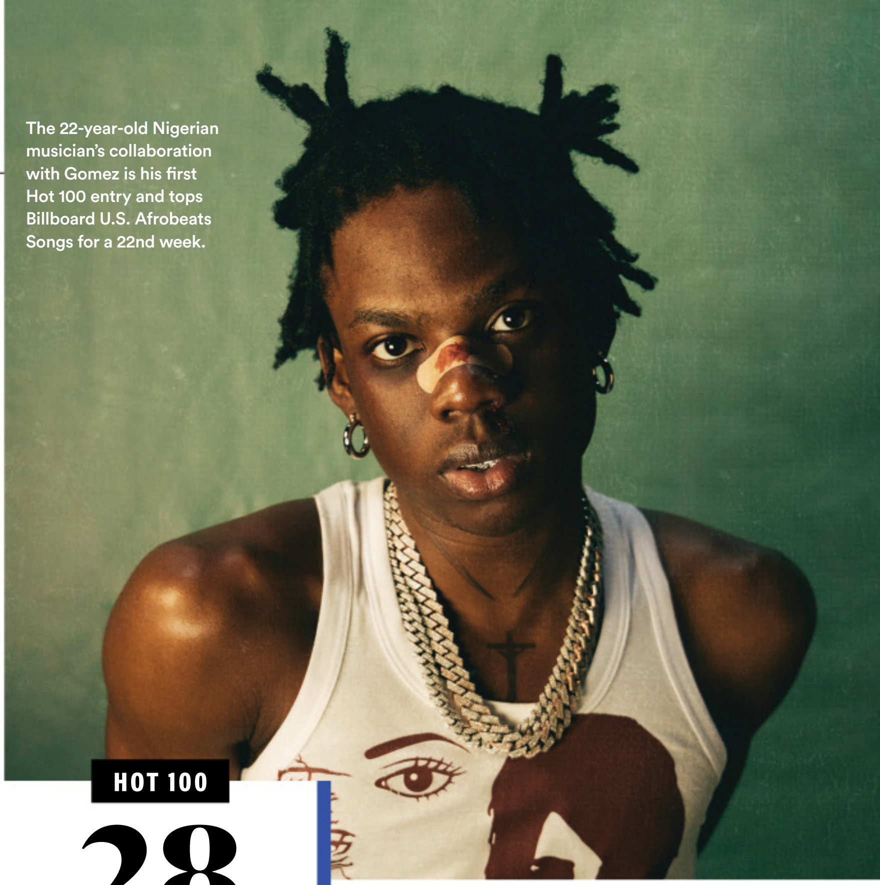
LAST WEEK	PEAK POSITION	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	7

COURTESY OF RCA RECORDS

Hot 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
-	①	①	**#1 for 2 WEEKS** **STM** **Flowers** KID HARPOON,T.JOHNSON (M.CYRUS,M.R.POLLACK,G.HEIN)	**Miley Cyrus** SMILEY MILEY/COLUMBIA	1	2
②	②	②	**Kill Bill** R.BISEL,C.LANG (S.I.ROWE,R.BISEL,C.LANG)	**SZA** TOP DAWG/RCA	2	7
①	3	3	**Anti-Hero** J.M.ANTONOFF,T.SWIFT (T.SWIFT,J.M.ANTONOFF)	**Taylor Swift** REPUBLIC	1	14
⑤	④	④	**AIR** **Creepin'** METRO BOOMIN,DAHEALA (C.L.HAWKINS,E.SERMON,P.SMITH,M.C.JONES,E.N.BHRAONAIN,R.RYAN, N.RYAN,M.M.WINANS)	**Metro Boomin, The Weeknd & 21 Savage** BOOMINATI/REPUBLIC	4	8
3	5	5	**Unholy** ILYA,CIRKUT,B.SLATKIN,O.FEDI,JIMMY NAPES,S.SMITH (S.SMITH,J.J.NAPIER,I.SALMANZADEH,H.R.WALTER, B.SLATKTIN,O.FEDI,K.PETRAS)	**Sam Smith & Kim Petras** EMI/CAPITOL	1	18
④	⑥	⑥	**I'm Good (Blue)** D.GUETTA,TIMOFEY (B.REXHA,P.D.GUETTA,G.RANDONE,KAMILLE,M.GABUTTI,M.LOBINA,P.J.PLESTED)	**David Guetta & Bebe Rexha** WHAT A DJ/WARNER	4	22
⑥	⑦	⑦	**Die For You** DOC MCKINNEY,CIRKUT,THE WEEKND,CASHMERE CAT,PRINCE 85 (A.TESFAYE,M.MCKINNEY, PRINCE 85,DYLAN WIGGINS,M.A.HOIBERG,W.T.WALSH)	**The Weeknd** XO/REPUBLIC	6	26
7	8	8	**Rich Flex** VINYLZ,TAY KEITH,FNZ,BOOGZDABEAST (C.J.HARRIS, JR.,A.GRAHAM,S.B.A.JOSEPH,A.HERNANDEZ, B.L.CHAMBERS,M.J.MULE,I.J.DEBONI,J.GWIN,C.BERNSTEIN,M.J.PETE,B.D.SESSION JR,A.GENEEN WHITE, G.HAYES,A.DAVIS)	**Drake & 21 Savage** OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	2	12
8	10	9	**As It Was** KID HARPOON,T.JOHNSON (H.STYLES,T.E.P.HULL,T.JOHNSON)	**Harry Styles** ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	1	43
⑪	⑪	⑩	**Golden Hour** JVKE,ZVC (J.LAWSON,Z.LAWSON)	**JVKE** JVKE/AWAL	10	22
⑩	13	⑪	**Something In The Orange** R.HADLOCK (Z.L.BRYAN)	**Zach Bryan** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER/WAR	10	40
⑯	⑯	⑫	**Just Wanna Rock** MCVERTT,SYNTHETIC (S.WOODS,M.CAMARA,J.MERCADO)	**Lil Uzi Vert** GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	12	15
-	⑨	13	**Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53** BIZARRAP (G.J.CONDE,S.ALVARADO,SHAKIRA,K.M.CRUZ MORENO)	**Bizarrap & Shakira** DALE PLAY/THE ORCHARD/ SONY MUSIC LATIN	9	2
14	⑮	⑭	**Made You Look** FEDE VINDVER (M.TRAINOR,S.M.DOUGLAS,L.F.VINDVER AROSA)	**Meghan Trainor** EPIC	12	14
13	17	⑮	**Cuff It** B.KNOWLES CARTER,NOVA WAV,RISSI,RAPHAEL SAADIQ (B.G.KNOWLES CARTER,D.ANDREWS, B.C.CONEY,MORTEN RISTORP,RAPHAEL SAADIQ,T.Y.NASH,M.C.BROCKERT,A.H.MCGRIER,N.G.RODGERS, JR.)	**Beyonce** PARKWOOD/COLUMBIA	10	24
⑫	⑭	16	**Under The Influence** KIDDOMINANT (C.M.BROWN,A.AGBOOLA,T.MCKIE,DAVIDO)	**Chris Brown** CBE/RCA	12	20
9	12	17	**Bad Habit** STEVE LACY (S.T.L.MOYA,B.FOUSHEE,D.GORDON,M.CASTELLANOS,J.C.KIRBY)	**Steve Lacy** L-M/RCA	1	30
⑱	⑲	⑱	**Thank God** D.HUFF (C.D.STALNECKER,K.A.FISHMAN,J.FREE,J.HOGE,J.MULLINS)	**Kane Brown With Katelyn Brown** ZONE 4/RCA NASHVILLE/RCA	17	20
⑰	㉑	⑲	**Rock And A Hard Place** A.R.SHAWN (H.WARREN,J.HACKWORTH,J.HARVEY)	**Bailey Zimmerman** ELEKTRA/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/3EE/WEA	17	33
15	20	20	**You Proof** J.MOI,CHARLIE HANDSOME (M.WALLEN,A.G.GORLEY,E.K.SMITH,CHARLIE HANDSOME)	**Morgan Wallen** MERCURY/BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	5	37

Go to the Chart Beat section of billboard.com for complete charts coverage.



The 22-year-old Nigerian musician's collaboration with Gomez is his first Hot 100 entry and tops Billboard U.S. Afrobeats Songs for a 22nd week.

SCRDOFME

HOT 100

28

"Calm Down"
Rema & Selena Gomez

How'd you link with Selena Gomez for the "Calm Down" remix?

REMA It started with being a fan and supporting her music. She actually came across my music, too, and wrote to me. Around June, I started seeing the impact [of the original, released last February], so I started hinting to my team, "This might be a song to do a remix to." I felt like we needed someone that could take it to the next level. From our discussions, planning, available contacts and friendship, Selena was the best bet. We felt no need to reach out to anybody else.

How do you feel about the song becoming a crossover hit?

Every day I wake up to good news — not just about how well my career is going, [but] how well my culture is flying. Afrobeats is going to the next level. This song is opening doors and bridges. Listeners want to know what more is coming from Nigeria, from Africa. I'm so happy. Seeing people who don't speak my language sing my song word-for-word, it really shows that people are impacted by the sound, and I'm just grateful for it.

What do you hope to accomplish this year?

I really want to keep focusing on impacting the African youth. Before I started getting global [recognition], my fellow Africans were my propeller. They're the ones who took me to the world. We have to start putting up good shows [in Nigeria]. It's good to do world tours, but as much as we are traveling and making the news, I just want to focus on home. We need infrastructure. The rest of the world is giving us that. It's very important that we actually invest in ourselves, because we really want the world to come to us.

—MARC GRIFFIN

HOT 100 FIRST-TIMERS

Artists who have recently made their initial appearances on the chart

ARTIST	SONG	DEBUT POSITION	DEBUT DATE
TAEYANG featuring Jimin	"Vibe"	76	Jan. 28
Mac DeMarco	"Heart to Heart"	98	Jan. 28
Ice Spice	"Gangsta Boo" with Lil Tjay	82	Feb. 4
Gabito Ballesteros, Peso Pluma & Natanael Cano	"AMG"	92	Feb. 4
2Rare	"Do It Again" with NLE Choppa	96	Feb. 4
Finesse2tymes	"Back End"	98	Feb. 4
ThxSoMch	"Spit in My Face!"	100	Feb. 4

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD HOT 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE AND SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2023 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Rotten Tomatoes 91% AUDIENCE SCORE
AS OF 12/28/22

“ONE OF THE BEST PICTURES OF THE YEAR”
VARIETY

WHITNEY HOUSTON: I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY

“ACKIE’S PERFORMANCE IS SOMETHING TO BE CHEERED.”
AP Associated Press

“A CELEBRATION… CONSISTENTLY ENTERTAINING.”
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

“A LAVISH, ALL-STOPS-OUT BIOPIC THAT GETS HER STORY RIGHT.”
VARIETY

“THE FILM RECREATES MOMENTS WITH AS MUCH FIDELITY AND REMEMBER-THIS AUTHENTICITY AS POSSIBLE.”
RollingStone

“CLIVE DAVIS IS PLAYED WITH AFFECTIONATE PERFECTION BY STANLEY TUCCI.”
TIME

“ANYONE WHO LOVES WHITNEY HOUSTON AND HER MUSIC WILL LEAVE THE FILM WITH THAT LOVE REINFORCED.”
The Hollywood Reporter

TRISTAR PICTURES PRESENTS A BLACK LABEL MEDIA AND COMPELLING PICTURES PRESENTATION A MUSE OF FIRE PRIMARY WAVE MUSIC WEST MADISON ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION A FILM BY KASI LEMMONS "WHITNEY HOUSTON: I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY" NAOMI ACKIE STANLEY TUCCI ASHTON SANDERS TAMARA TUNIE NAFESSA WILLIAMS AND CLARKE PETERS CASTING BY KIM COLEMAN, CSA MUSIC SUPERVISOR MAUREEN CROWE ORIGINAL SCORE BY CHANDA DANCY COSTUME DESIGNER CHARLESE ANTOINETTE JONES EDITOR DAYSHA BROADWAY, ACE PRODUCTION DESIGNER GERALD SULLIVAN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BARRY ACKROYD, ASC EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS NAOMI ACKIE KASI LEMMONS WILLIAM EARON MARINA CAPPI ERIKA HAMPSON JOSH CROOK RACHEL SMITH SETH SPECTOR DENNIS CASALI JANICE BEARD LEXIE BEARD TANNER BEARD MATTHEW GALLAGHER JANE BERGERE STELLA MEGHIE MACKENZIE O'CONNELL PRODUCED BY DENIS O'SULLIVAN JEFF KALLIGHERI ANTHONY McCARTEN PAT HOUSTON CLIVE DAVIS LARRY MESTEL MOLLY SMITH THAD LUCKINBILL TRENT LUCKINBILL MATT JACKSON CHRISTINA PAPAGJIKA MATTHEW SALLOWAY WRITTEN BY ANTHONY McCARTEN DIRECTED BY KASI LEMMONS

COMPELLING PICTURES MUSE OF FIRE PRIMARYWAVE BLACK LABEL MEDIA WEST MADISON

PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED PG-13 STRONG DRUG CONTENT, SOME STRONG LANGUAGE, SUGGESTIVE REFERENCES AND SMOKING
Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13

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Soundtrack on RCA Records SONY TRISTAR PICTURES a Sony Company

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BILLBOARD 200

3

Trippie Redd
Mansion Musik

The hip-hop artist notches his seventh top 10 entry as his latest release debuts with 56,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the week ending Jan. 26, according to Luminate.

18

Måneskin
Rush!

The project starts at No. 1 on Top Alternative Albums (18,000 units), marking the group's first chart-topper on that list, and becomes the rock band's first entry to reach the top 100 of the Billboard 200.

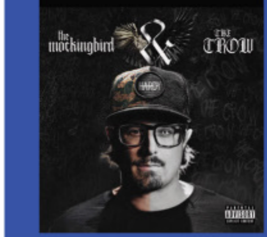
190

Wilco
Cruel Country

After its release on CD and vinyl on Jan. 20, the set debuts with 7,000 units earned, nearly all from album sales. *Cruel Country* initially arrived on streaming platforms and at digital retail last May.

4

HARDY
The Mockingbird & The Crow



HARDY hits the top 10 of the Billboard 200 for the first time as his new double album, *The Mockingbird & The Crow*, arrives at No. 4 with 55,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the week ending Jan. 26, according to Luminate — easily his best week ever in terms of units.

The half-country/half-rock project, which also launches at No. 1 on the Top Country Albums and Top Rock Albums charts, includes guest turns from Jeremy McKinnon (of A Day To Remember), Lainey Wilson and Morgan Wallen.

The Mockingbird & The Crow marks the highest debut for a rock album on the Billboard 200 since the Red Hot Chili Peppers' *Return of the Dream Canteen* entered at No. 3 (Oct. 29, 2022) and the highest debut for a country album since Luke Combs' *Growin' Up* started at No. 2 (July 9, 2022). —KEITH CAULFIELD

Billboard 200

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	**Artist** IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	**Title**	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	**#1 for 7 WEEKS** **SZA** TOP DAWG/RCA	**SOS**	1	7
2	2	2	**Taylor Swift** REPUBLIC	**Midnights**	1	14
HOT SHOT DEBUT		③	**Trippie Redd** 1400/TENTHOUSAND PROJECTS/CAPITOL	**Mansion Musik**	3	1
NEW		④	**HARDY** BIG LOUD ROCK/BIG LOUD	**The Mockingbird & The Crow**	4	1
3	3	5	**Metro Boomin** BOOMINATI/REPUBLIC	**Heroes & Villains**	1	8
4	4	6	**Drake & 21 Savage** OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	**Her Loss**	1	12
5	6	7	**Bad Bunny** RIMAS	**Un Verano Sin Ti**	1	38
6	7	8	**Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	**Dangerous: The Double Album**	1	107
7	8	⑨	**Zach Bryan** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	**American Heartbreak**	5	36
8	9	10	**Lil Baby** QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN	**It's Only Me**	1	15
10	10	11	**Harry Styles** ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	**Harry's House**	1	36
⑫	119	⑫	**GG** **The Weeknd** XO/REPUBLIC	**Starboy**	1	273
14	11	13	**Bailey Zimmerman** ELEKTRA/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/3EE/WMN	**Leave The Light On**	9	15
15	13	14	**Elton John** ROCKET/ISLAND/UME	**Diamonds**	7	272
17	12	15	**Future** FREEBANDZ/EPIC	**I Never Liked You**	1	39
16	20	⑯	**SZA** TOP DAWG/RCA	**Ctrl**	3	294
37	⑮	17	**Eminem** SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	**Curtain Call: The Hits**	1	616
NEW		⑱	**Maneskin** EXIT MUSIC MANAGEMENT/ARISTA	**Rush!**	18	1
19	⑭	19	**Olivia Rodrigo** GEFFEN/IGA	**Sour**	1	88
㉑	19	⑳	**Drake** OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	**Certified Lover Boy**	1	73

SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD 200: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2023 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

UTA

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and our very own

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MARCELL RÉV

GLOBAL 200

1

“Flowers”
Miley Cyrus

MILEY CYRUS’ “Flowers” holds atop the Billboard Global 200 with 217.1 million streams (up 21%) and 107,000 sold (up 12%) worldwide in its second full tracking week (Jan. 20-26; it was released Jan. 12), according to Luminate.

One week after the song logged the third-biggest streaming week worldwide (179.1 million) since the Global 200 launched in September 2020, it now boasts the second-biggest as it surpasses Blackpink’s “Pink Venom” (212.1 million, Sept. 3, 2022). It trails only BTS’ “Butter” (289.2 million, June 5, 2021).

Cyrus first announced during her *Miley’s New Year’s Eve Party* NBC special that “Flowers” would arrive Jan. 13, which fans noticed doubles as her ex-husband Liam Hemsworth’s birthday. That juicy narrative and fervent interaction on TikTok helped swell the profile of the song, which also serves as the lead single for Cyrus’ eighth studio album, *Endless Summer Vacation*, due March 10.

“Flowers” also leads the U.S.-based Billboard Hot 100 for a second week after blooming as her second No. 1, following “Wrecking Ball” for three weeks in 2013. “Flowers” sports the greatest weekly streaming sum — 59.8 million — since Drake’s “Way 2 Sexy” (featuring Future and Young Thug) totaled 67.3 million (Sept. 18, 2021). It also is the first song with consecutive weeks of at least 50 million in two years — after netting 52.6 million streams in its first week — since Olivia Rodrigo’s “drivers license” launched with 76.1 million and followed with 59.7 million (Jan. 23 and Jan. 30, 2021).

Plus, “Flowers” is the first track to post at least 50 million U.S. streams in one week and proceed to gain the following week in over three years. Roddy Ricch’s “The Box” last accomplished the feat, increasing from 68.2 million to 77.2 million (Jan. 18 and Jan. 25, 2020).

—GARY TRUST

Global 200

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
-	①	①	**#1 for 2 WEEKS** **GG** **Flowers**	**Miley Cyrus**	1	2
⑫	②	**2**	**Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53**	**Bizarrap & Shakira**	2	3
①	③	**3**	**Kill Bill**	**SZA**	1	7
3	4	④	**Calm Down**	**Rema & Selena Gomez**	3	30
2	6	**5**	**Unholy**	**Sam Smith & Kim Petras**	1	18
⑥	⑤	**6**	**Creepin’**	**Metro Boomin, The Weeknd & 21 Savage**	3	8
⑦	⑦	⑦	**Escapism**	**RAYE Featuring 070 Shake**	7	9
4	8	**8**	**I’m Good (Blue)**	**David Guetta & Bebe Rexha**	2	22
5	9	**9**	**Anti-Hero**	**Taylor Swift**	1	14
8	11	**10**	**As It Was**	**Harry Styles**	1	43
9	10	**11**	**Ditto**	**NewJeans**	8	6
⑩	13	⑫	**OMG**	**NewJeans**	10	4
⑱	⑯	**13**	**Golden Hour**	**JVKE**	13	22
14	⑮	**14**	**La Bachata**	**Manuel Turizo**	6	29
㉘	㉒	⑮	**Sure Thing**	**Miguel**	15	6
17	⑭	**16**	**La Jumpa**	**Arcangel & Bad Bunny**	14	8
⑪	20	**17**	**Until I Found You**	**Stephen Sanchez**	11	37
15	18	**18**	**I Ain’t Worried**	**OneRepublic**	5	34
19	21	**19**	**Another Love**	**Tom Odell**	14	91
13	24	⑳	**Made You Look**	**Meghan Trainor**	6	14

STREAMING AND SALES DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200: THE WEEK’S MOST POPULAR SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND SALES ACTIVITY FROM OVER 200 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD — INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES — AS TRACKED BY LUMINATE. THE RANKING IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED FORMULA INCORPORATING OFFICIAL-ONLY STREAMS ON BOTH SUBSCRIPTION AND AD-SUPPORTED TIERS OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2023 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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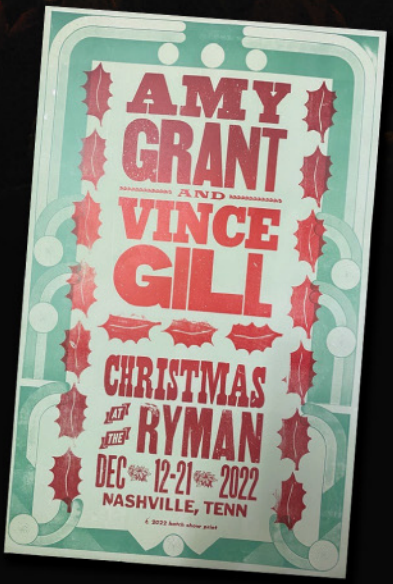
AMY GRANT AND VINCE GILL

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DEC 12-21 2022

NASHVILLE, TENN

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ARTIST 100

20

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

WEEKS ON CHART

4

Following the Jan. 19 announcement that David Crosby (above) had died at the age of 81, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's 1970 No. 1 album, *Déjà Vu*, reenters the Billboard 200 at No. 129 (9,000 equivalent album units, up 238%, according to Luminate). Plus, Crosby, Stills & Nash's *Greatest Hits* returns at No. 156 (8,000, up 287%). -KEITH CAULFIELD

NO. **49**

Man Of The 'Hour'

JVKE achieves his first Billboard Hot 100 top 10 as "Golden Hour" rises 11-10 with 29.1 million in radio reach, 14 million streams and 2,000 sold. Released on his eponymous independent imprint, the ballad is being promoted by Sony Music Entertainment's AWAL label, which also notches its first Hot 100 top 10. (AWAL hit a previous No. 27 best with Lauv's "I Like Me Better" in 2018.) "Golden Hour" concurrently becomes JVKE's first top 10 on the Mainstream Top 40 airplay chart (11-10) after "This Is What Falling in Love Feels Like" reached No. 35 last July. -GARY TRUST

NO. **83**

Smith's 'Whiskey' Wins

Nate Smith earns his first Country Airplay No. 1 with his debut entry on the chart, "Whiskey on You," which he co-wrote. He scored early success on TikTok — where he boasts 1.4 million followers — prior to signing to Sony Music Nashville's Arista roster in November 2021. "When I released 'Whiskey,' I wasn't sure what would happen ... I just knew I loved it," Smith says. "My fans were super encouraging on social media and then country radio welcomed the song with open arms, and for that, I couldn't be more grateful. Meanwhile, my dad is just glad I have a job." -JIM ASKER

Artist 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist	IMPRINT/LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	#1 for 63 WEEKS **Taylor Swift**	REPUBLIC	1	444
2	2	2	**SZA**	TOP DAWG/RCA	1	178
-	3	3	**Miley Cyrus**	SMILEY MILEY/COLUMBIA	3	118
3	4	4	**Morgan Wallen**	BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	1	203
4	5	5	**The Weeknd**	XO/REPUBLIC	1	394
5	6	6	**Drake**	OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	448
RE-ENTRY		7	**HARDY**	BIG LOUD ROCK/BIG LOUD	7	16
6	7	8	**Harry Styles**	ERSKINE/COLUMBIA	1	187
7	8	9	**Luke Combs**	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	1	308
9	9	10	**21 Savage**	SLAUGHTER GANG/EPIC	3	126
10	11	11	**Lil Baby**	QUALITY CONTROL/MOTOWN	1	246
15	14	12	**Future**	FREEBANDZ/EPIC	1	271
13	10	13	**Kendrick Lamar**	PGLANG/TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/IGA	1	369
11	13	14	**Zach Bryan**	BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	11	37
12	12	15	**Bad Bunny**	RIMAS	1	252
14	15	16	**Ed Sheeran**	ATLANTIC/AG	1	441
18	17	17	**Metro Boomin**	BOOMINATI/REPUBLIC	3	27
17	16	18	**Fleetwood Mac**	WARNER/RHINO	3	199
20	19	19	**Bailey Zimmerman**	ELEKTRA/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/3EE/WMN	9	35
RE-ENTRY		20	**Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young**	CSNY/RHINO	20	4

CROSBY: GUS STEWART/REDFERNS. JVKE: BRANDON PUGSLEY SMITH. JASON DAVIS/WIREIMAGE.

BILLBOARD ARTIST 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ARTISTS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY ALBUM AND TRACK SALES AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE, STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA FROM ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2023 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

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Aoife O'Donovan ✦ Baby Keem ✦ Billie Eilish
Bonobo ✦ Brandi Carlile ✦ Cassian ✦ Coldplay
David Guetta ✦ Diplo ✦ Drake ✦ Ed Sheeran
FINNEAS ✦ Four Tet ✦ Grace Jones ✦ Honey Dijon**
Ibrahim Maalouf ✦ The Infamous Stringdusters
Jack Harlow ✦ John Legend ✦ Jon Hopkins
Jonathan Wilson* ✦ Kaytranada
Kendrick Lamar ✦ Kenny Beats ✦ Lyle Lovett
Mark Ronson* ✦ North Mississippi Allstars
ODESZA ✦ Omar Apollo ✦ Perfume Genius
Pharrell ✦ PJ Morton ✦ Punch Brothers
Pusha T* ✦ Rick Ross ✦ Sampha* ✦ Sara Bareilles
Sean Paul* ✦ Shaggy ✦ Skrillex ✦ Soulwax**
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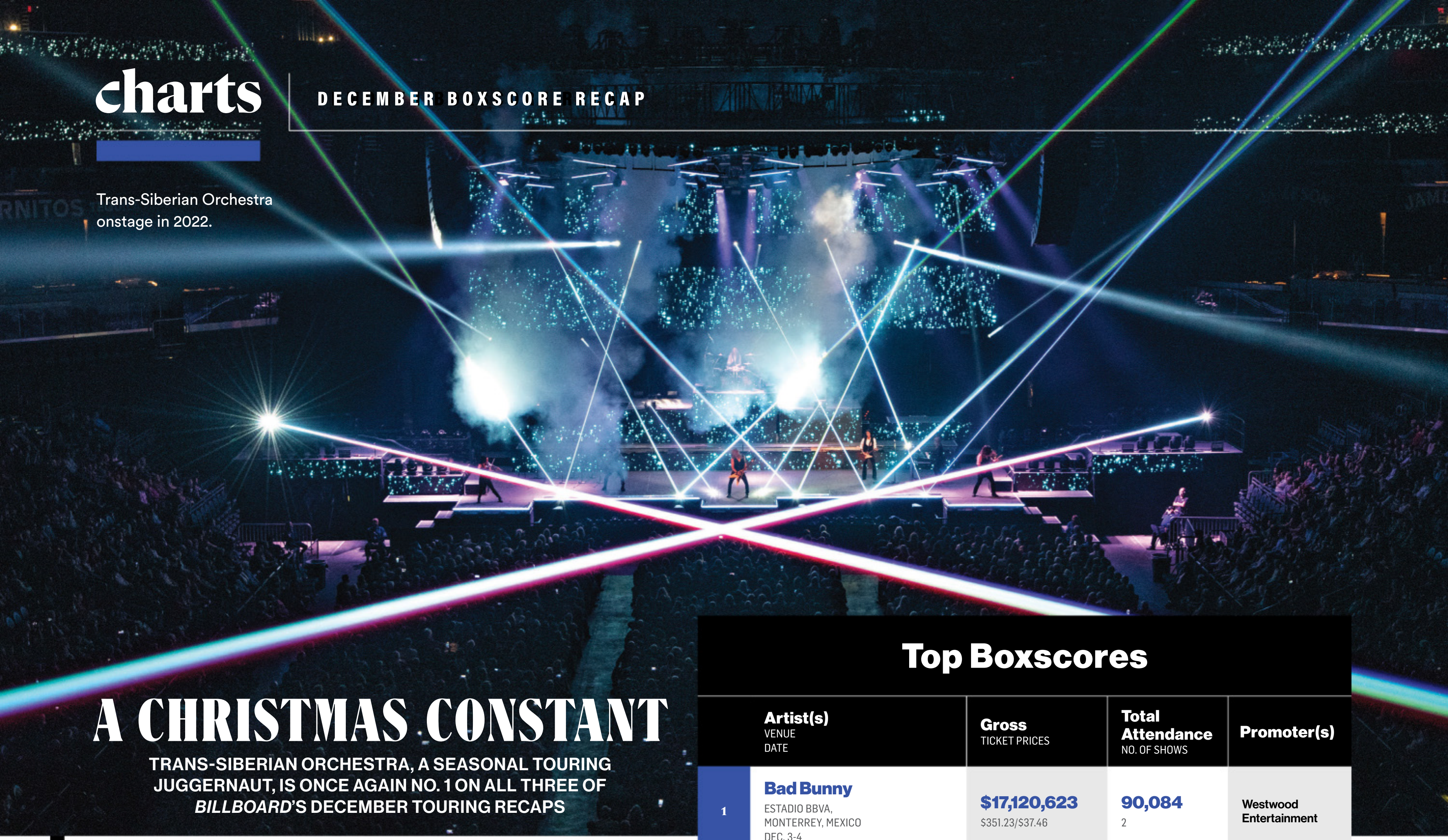

Trans-Siberian Orchestra onstage in 2022.

A CHRISTMAS CONSTANT

TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA, A SEASONAL TOURING JUGGERNAUT, IS ONCE AGAIN NO. 1 ON ALL THREE OF *BILLBOARD*'S DECEMBER TOURING RECAPS

TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA leads December's Top Tours chart in what is seemingly becoming an annual tradition: *Billboard* launched the monthly Boxscore report in February 2019, and since then, TSO has led all three December recaps. (There was no ranking for December 2020 due to the pandemic.) According to figures reported to Billboard Boxscore, the holiday-themed act grossed $50.9 million and sold 691,000 tickets across 71 shows during the 31-day period.

Capping at four shows per day, TSO employs two ensembles. One travels the eastern half of the United States and the other covers the western half, each playing matinee and prime-time concerts in some markets. The group collectively hit a high point on Dec. 23, grossing $3.6 million between two shows at Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio, and two at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minn. It was one of five days in the month that it grossed over $3 million.

Despite the band playing the same number of shows as it did in 2021, TSO's $50 million-plus monthly take is up 21% from its gross that December. Ticket sales were held back last year by lingering COVID-19 concerns, plus the wave of the omicron variant that severely affected the second half of the month, when the band's sales typically peak.

—ERIC FRANKENBERG

Top Tours

	Artist	Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Trans-Siberian Orchestra**	$50,900,849	690,847	71
2	**Daddy Yankee**	$37,179,893	335,852	15
3	**Bad Bunny**	$29,525,907	225,967	5
4	**Harry Styles**	$26,505,437	343,182	8
5	**Billy Joel**	$16,136,673	109,555	2
6	**Seventeen**	$16,058,788	146,203	4
7	**Andrea Bocelli**	$11,469,211	57,437	5
8	**Kevin Hart**	$10,855,732	108,786	12
9	**Wisin y Yandel**	$10,156,804	162,376	14
10	**George Strait**	$7,965,322	36,440	2

Top Boxscores

	Artist(s) VENUE DATE	Gross TICKET PRICES	Total Attendance NO. OF SHOWS	Promoter(s)
1	**Bad Bunny** ESTADIO BBVA, MONTERREY, MEXICO DEC. 3-4	$17,120,623 $351.23/$37.46	90,084 2	Westwood Entertainment
2	**Daddy Yankee** FORO SOL, MEXICO CITY DEC. 2-4	$13,773,219 $138.50/$27.25	193,318 3	CMN, OCESA
3	**Harry Styles** ALLIANZ PARQUE, SÃO PAULO DEC. 6, 13-14	$11,113,075 $143.24/$31.28	137,009 3	Live Nation
4	**Billy Joel** MELBOURNE CRICKET GROUND, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA DEC. 10	$10,540,925 $175.37/$54.35	76,313 1	Frontier Touring
5	**Bad Bunny** ESTADIO AZTECA, MEXICO CITY DEC. 9-10	$10,308,460 $388.68/$21.34	115,878 2	OCESA, Westwood Entertainment
6	**Wisin y Yandel** COLISEO DE PUERTO RICO JOSÉ MIGUEL AGRELOT, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO DEC. 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 22-23, 29-31	$10,156,804 $250/$25	162,376 14	No Limit Entertainment
7	**Harry Styles** ESTADIO RIVER PLATE, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA DEC. 3-4	$8,966,109 $100.68/$38.72	123,942 2	Live Nation
8	**George Strait** T-MOBILE ARENA, LAS VEGAS DEC. 2-3	$7,965,322 $999/$50	36,440 2	Messina Touring Group/AEG Presents
9	**Seventeen** VANTELIN DOME NAGOYA, NAGOYA, JAPAN DEC. 3-4	$7,005,289 $149/$78	81,644 2	HYBE
10	**Decadence New Year's Eve** COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER, DENVER DEC. 30-31	$6,058,652 $280/$99.50	41,861 2	AEG Presents

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Top Venues

15,001 OR MORE CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Madison Square Garden** NEW YORK	$22,802,049	178,855	13
2	**Estadio BBVA** MONTERREY, MEXICO	$17,120,623	90,084	2
3	**Estadio Azteca** MEXICO CITY	$14,207,055	155,293	3
4	**Foro Sol** MEXICO CITY	$13,773,219	193,318	3
5	**T-Mobile Arena** LAS VEGAS	$12,923,745	59,678	4
6	**Allianz Parque** SÃO PAULO	$11,113,075	137,009	3
7	**Melbourne Cricket Ground** MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA	$10,540,925	76,313	1
8	**O2 Arena** LONDON	$10,462,101	177,974	25
9	**Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot** SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO	$10,156,804	162,376	14
10	**Estadio River Plate** BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA	$8,966,109	123,942	2

Kevin Hart

Wisin y Yandel

10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**OVO Arena Wembley** LONDON	$6,235,530	82,905	11
2	**MECC Maastricht** MAASTRICHT, THE NETHERLANDS	$5,839,776	56,426	5
3	**Hallenstadion** ZURICH	$4,480,875	42,463	8
4	**Barclays Arena** HAMBURG, GERMANY	$4,047,564	71,769	11
5	**MGM Grand Garden** LAS VEGAS	$3,797,902	24,786	4
6	**Moody Center** AUSTIN	$3,381,290	31,983	3
7	**Van Andel Arena** GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.	$3,281,614	59,961	7
8	**Utilita Arena** NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND	$3,041,410	58,808	14
9	**Desert Diamond Casino** SAHUARITA, ARIZ.	$2,035,298	13,783	1
10	**Toyota Arena** ONTARIO, CALIF.	$1,914,749	23,531	3

Seventeen

5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. of Shows
1	**Radio City Music Hall** NEW YORK	$76,676,224	706,926	130
2	**Texas Trust CU Theatre** DALLAS	$4,173,161	61,142	31
3	**YouTube Theater** INGLEWOOD, CALIF.	$2,661,800	23,207	5
4	**Bill Graham Civic Auditorium** SAN FRANCISCO	$2,629,957	33,264	4
5	**Alameda Theatre** MEXICO CITY	$2,553,051	89,132	19
6	**Mohegan Sun Arena** UNCASVILLE, CONN.	$2,318,853	48,888	11
7	**Agganis Arena** BOSTON	$2,186,537	46,137	14
8	**Dolby Live** LAS VEGAS	$1,805,966	9,782	2
9	**Total Mortgage Arena** BRIDGEPORT, CONN.	$1,716,836	7,939	1
10	**The Anthem** WASHINGTON, D.C.	$1,641,801	26,978	8

5,000 OR LESS CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Fox Theatre** ATLANTA	$5,047,259	56,977	15
2	**Chicago Theatre** CHICAGO	$4,927,149	52,131	18
3	**Orpheum Theatre** MINNEAPOLIS	$3,602,819	44,632	19
4	**Beacon Theatre** NEW YORK	$2,318,657	26,994	11
5	**The Theater at MGM National Harbor** OXON HILL, MD.	$2,091,394	24,691	12
6	**The Mission Ballroom** DENVER	$1,733,478	25,107	8
7	**Teatro Telcel** MEXICO CITY	$1,668,731	29,486	35
8	**DeVos Performance Hall** GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.	$1,217,561	26,761	16
9	**Terminal 5** NEW YORK	$1,201,058	27,723	9
10	**Meridian Hall** TORONTO	$1,136,041	18,172	6

SEVENTEEN: SARAH MORRIS/GETTY IMAGES. HART: @DOPEPICKWAN. WISIN Y YANDEL: OSCAR MENA.

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PG. 36 VINYL GROWTH SLOWS
PG. 38 GLOBAL STOCK INDEX 2022 ANALYSIS
PG. 40 BEYOND MUSIC CEO JANGWON LEE

MUSIC AND MONEY

More Signings Fail To Produce More Stars

The majors have been on a signing spree, leaving product managers and marketers overworked

BY ELIAS LEIGHT // ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE ELLINGSON

FROM 2002 TO 2004, the music industry produced a steady stream of new artists with big hits: Around 30 first-timers landed in the top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 each year. In 2022, only 12 managed the feat (plus a pair of songs from the *Encanto* cast). "This is the hardest time to break through and market music," one manager tells *Billboard*.

It's not for lack of trying: In recent years, labels have been signing acts at whirlwind speed, yet this surge of new signings hasn't yet amounted to a surge of new stars. And some executives worry that the dry spell is partly due to the recent wave of signings, claiming that the majors have inked deals at a rate beyond their ability to provide service.

"The over-signing of [the] COVID [era] is now a pain point at every label," says one manager with multiple acts on majors. If staff growth doesn't keep up with roster growth, artists don't necessarily get the care they need to level up. "No one has enough product managers. So they're all getting crushed."

"It is not humanly possible for a product manager — the person responsible for the story of the artists, the story of the music — to creatively, strategically and efficiently implement marketing for 20 artists at one time," says Craig Baylis, a former major-label product manager who runs the boutique publishing company Eighth & Groove. Record companies often "aren't getting the best out of [their staff] because they are ramming them with all of these artists that they're not even getting the chance to know."

All the major-label groups have broken new artists in the last few years, of course, whether it's Olivia Rodrigo (Universal Music Group), Steve Lacy (Sony Music Group) or Zach Bryan (Warner Music Group). In a January letter to staff, UMG chairman/CEO Lucian Grainge reaffirmed the company's commitment to this task, writing, "We diligently work, day in and day out, to break our artists and songwriters." While speaking with investors last year, SMG chairman Rob Stringer said "creative staff," which encompasses A&R, marketing, product managers and artist relations, had increased at a faster rate than artist roster size, helping launch new acts onto the streaming charts.

Roster size numbers are difficult to come by, but in 2017, a study organized by the RIAA

David Crosby, founding member of The Byrds and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, died at the age of 81.

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on **Ticketmaster** and competition within the ticketing industry.

found that major labels had signed 658 artists that year, up from 589 in 2014. Although the RIAA hasn't released a follow-up, many lawyers and executives say the rate of signings has climbed since that report. Two senior executives believe the number of deals is now as high or higher than it has ever been; SMG told investors that new signings rose 32.4% between 2017 and 2021.

The recent wave of signings is in part a by-product of streaming becoming the main revenue source at the majors. The biggest streaming services pay rights holders according to their share of total plays on the platform. But low-cost distribution has brought a "vast and unnavigable number of tracks" to digital service providers (DSPs), as Grainge put it in his staff memo. Streams for those tracks eat into big record companies' piece of the pie. If tens of thousands of new tracks are added to streaming services daily, "then [major-label] market share is going to be diluted by default," Stringer explained last year.

Signing more is a way of fighting back. "For major labels, independents and distributors, it's all about volume of signings now," says Andreas Katsambas, who was a senior vp at BMG before joining the analytics company Chartmetric as president/COO.

This puts major labels in a bind: They need to sign and release more to keep market share up, but this makes it harder for each artist signed to get the attention they need to break through.

"Intelligent marketing is not going to be a facet of developing artists today if record companies are going to continue doling out artists, singles and projects at the frequency that they do," says Baylis. "There is a high level of fatigue that product managers are experiencing."

A former major-label employee who left to go into management agrees that product managers and marketers tend to be "completely overworked." "A digital person may have 60 projects," he adds. "It's crazy."

Mike Caren, founder of the publishing company and independent label APG (and former president of global A&R at WMG), points out that "even the best marketer is limited by the number of hours in the day and days in the week." He adds: "Executing an artist's vision is time-intensive, and the best artists challenge their teams with unique ideas that take a lot of time to properly deliver. Capacity is a key metric to determine when choosing a label or team."

This may be especially true today, when the ability to grow audiences seems increasingly like the most important service a label can offer. Artists no longer need to turn to majors for national and international distribution; now, anyone can do those things from their couch. Instead, "gaining awareness is the most challenging thing for anyone that releases music," Katsambas says. "Awareness more than anything else, and then engagement and retention."

Are those goals compatible with high-volume signing? "It's hard creating a game plan for longevity for some of these artists that are really talented and deserving," Baylis says, "because executives are charged with just feeding the beast called the DSPs."

Spotify announced it would cut 6% of staff, following similar layoff announcements from Google, Microsoft and other tech companies.

Justin Bieber sold a package of rights and royalty streams to **Hipgnosis Songs Capital** for $200 million.

MARKET WATCH

26.5B

↑0.2%

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS WEEK OVER WEEK

Number of audio and video on-demand streams for the week ending Jan. 26.

18.69M

↓0.3%

ALBUM CONSUMPTION UNITS WEEK OVER WEEK

Album sales plus track-equivalent albums plus streaming-equivalent albums for the week ending Jan. 26.

103.9B

↑18.3%

TOTAL ON-DEMAND STREAMS YEAR OVER YEAR TO DATE

Number of audio and video streams for 2023 so far over the same period in 2022.

Vinyl records for sale at Sound Garden in Fells Point, Md.

VINYL GROWTH SLOWS

But is that a problem? Or is an overheated market finding a new normal?

IN 2020, after years of steady growth, the vinyl market exploded. Sales climbed over 46% in the United States, according to Luminate. Then, remarkably, they jumped another 51% in 2021.

In 2022, that hot streak cooled: Luminate reported that sales were up a little more than 4%. Year-over-year growth also fell in the United Kingdom from 23.2% to 2.9%, according to the British Phonographic Industry.

"Some labels report sales are down," says Nick Gordon, chief partnership officer at Symphonic Distribution. And big retailers like Walmart offered some titles at a heavily discounted price around the holiday season, stoking fears among the smaller players that those stores had overbought — maybe an indication of slackening demand.

Despite these figures, Gordon believes the vinyl market remains "healthy." And many of his peers — from distributors to indie-label heads, chain stores to independent retailers — seem unruffled by the slower growth. "It corrected the market," says Todd Oenbrink, sales director for All Media Supply, a Florida-based indie wholesaler.

"It feels like a welcomed return to normalcy," agrees Terry Cole, founder and owner of Loveland, Ohio-based store Plaid Room Records and the label Colemine Records. "It feels way healthier. This industry is not set up for rapid growth."

During the first two years of the pandemic, demand for vinyl grew like crazy, outpacing production capacity. But retailers, distributors and manufacturers consider those two years an aberration — from 2015 to 2019, year-over-year growth ranged from around 9% to 17%.

"We saw exuberance for all sorts of things during the peak COVID era: vinyl, Netflix, cooking lessons, home improvement," says Russ Krupnick, managing partner of market research company MusicWatch. Now listeners "are spending money on other things — going out drinking, going out eating, going to gigs — whereas they couldn't do that much in lockdown," says Peter Quicke, chair of independent label Ninja Tune. (Vinyl sales for Ninja Tune rose over 25% in 2022.) Even with this change in behavior, vinyl sales still grew.

With higher prices for raw materials and labor, the cost of records has increased — and several independent store owners expect major-label prices to increase again in 2023. This is their chief source of worry, especially in an uncertain macroeconomic climate. "We see customers backing away from the high prices for new releases," says Michael Kurtz, co-founder of Record Store Day.

But the vinyl industry's production capacity is also expected to rise. Slower growth last year "was less about people suddenly not wanting to buy as many records and more about the amount of records available to purchase," says Cameron Schaefer, CEO of Vinyl Me, Please. (VMP sales were up 15% in 2022.) "The biggest limiter on growth is just pressing." Independent labels are struggling with long turnaround times, executives say, which leads to missed sales. But more plants are coming online, and existing plants are adding capacity.

There are other positive signs. "When Harry Styles came out last year, we saw a spike in turntable sales," says Crissi Bariatti, music buyer at Barnes & Noble. "We are converting a lot of new vinyl fans." The chain had an "amazing December" for vinyl sales, and "January numbers are great" as well.

"The next two years will give a much better preview of what to expect from the vinyl industry long term," says Schaefer. "People got excited by high numbers in the years prior. If we can get to 10% a year, stay there and do that well? That's healthy." —E.L.

ERIC BARADAT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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New York legislators called for an investigation into **Madison Square Garden's** use of facial recognition technology.

Madonna announced a career-spanning 40th-anniversary run called The Celebration Tour.

GLOBAL MUSIC INDEX

CONSUMPTION UP, STOCKS DOWN

Live music rebounded and streaming grew, but investor confidence waned

BY GLENN PEOPLES

THERE WAS A STARK DIFFERENCE between the performance of the music business and some of the sector's most prominent companies in 2022. Total U.S. music consumption increased 9.2% last year, according to Luminate, and live music rebounded from pandemic slowdowns. Amid soaring inflation and rising interest rates, however, investors' confidence in corporate profits waned and stock prices plummeted. Despite record ticket sales and strong streaming growth, the Billboard Global Music Index, a group of 20 music-focused companies listed in seven countries, declined 36.4% in 2022.

That was worse than the tech-heavy Nasdaq (down 33.1%), almost twice the downturn of the S&P 500 (down 19.4%) and about four times that of the Dow Jones Industrial Average (down 8.8%).

The two largest companies in the index, Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group, fared relatively well. UMG's share price fell 9.2%, and WMG's declined 18.9%. Another label group, South Korea's SM Entertainment, improved 3.4% — one of only two companies in the index whose share price rose in 2022. South Korea's HYBE declined 50.3%, a steep drop that can be attributed to the hiatus that its main breadwinner, BTS, announced in June. As a group, record labels and publishers' index value declined 23.1%.

The worst of the index's four sectors was streaming. The index value of the six streaming companies declined 54.9%. Spotify, the index's most valuable company at the end of 2021, dropped to the No. 4 company after its share price plummeted 66.3% in 2022. This mirrored larger market trends: Investors favored streaming stocks during the pandemic but seem to have lost interest in 2022. Pandemic darling Netflix fell 51.1%, and Disney shed 43.9%.

The smaller streaming companies, on average, fared worse than their larger competitors. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates-based Anghami declined 84.3%, French streaming platform Deezer dropped 51.4%, and U.S.-based LiveOne fell 49.7%. The Shenzhen, China-based Tencent Music Entertainment bucked streaming's decline with a 20.9% gain, though TME shares were recovering from a 2021 battering, when Chinese regulators cracked down on tech companies' anti-competitive practices. From March 23 to Dec. 20, 2021, TME shares fell 81.1%. In 2022, they had nowhere to go but up.

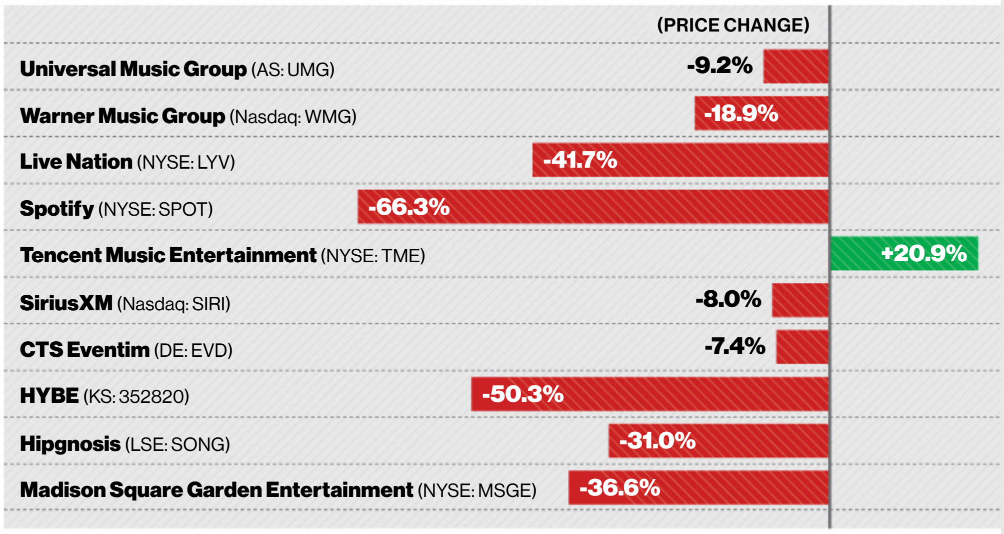
The index value of live-music companies — Live Nation, CTS Eventim and MSG Entertainment — declined 35.9%. Even though Live Nation posted record revenue in the second and third quarters, the company's index value dropped 41.7% in 2022. Its shares stumbled 10.9% over two days in November after the problematic presale for Taylor Swift's Eras Tour enraged consumers and brought the possibility of regulatory action, although about half of the loss was recovered by the end of December. MSGE shares fell 36.6%, while those of the German promoter CTS Eventim fell just 7.4%.

Broadcasters' index value declined 33.3%. Even though shares of satellite radio company SiriusXM, the largest broadcaster by market capitalization, declined just 8%, the two terrestrial broadcasters in the index fared much worse: iHeartMedia shares fell 70.9%, while those of Cumulus Media dropped 44.8%.

The float-adjusted index aggregates the market capitalizations of 20 music companies spanning record labels, music publishing, live music, streaming and broadcasting. Each company's outstanding shares have been adjusted to remove corporate owners, executives, directors and other long-term shareholders, so the index represents the value of shares tradeable on the markets.

Share Price Change In 2022

Ranked by index value, largest to smallest

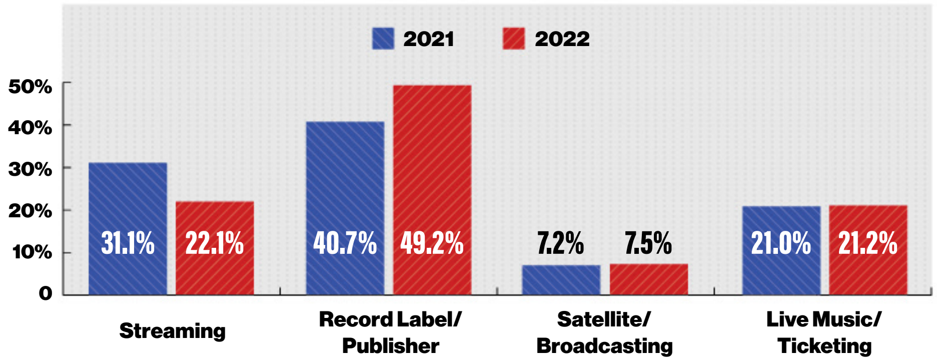


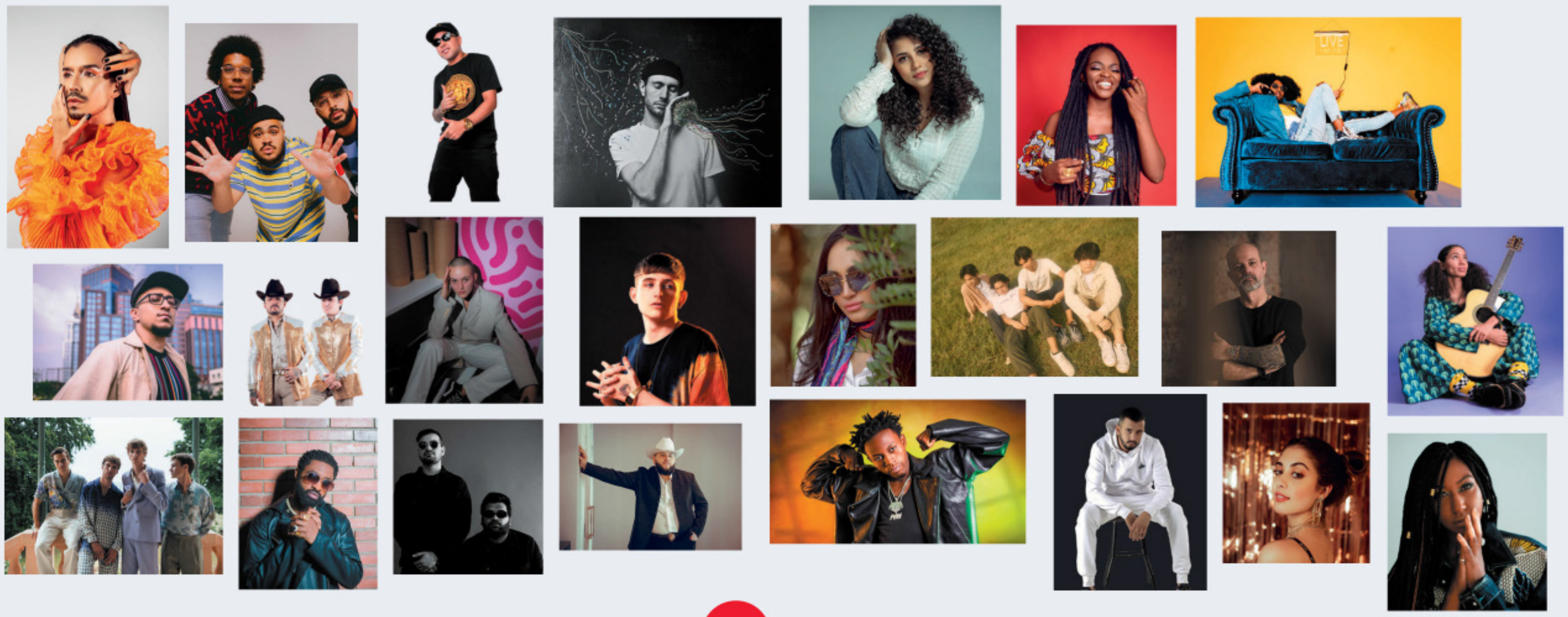
Index Value By Region Of Listing

UNITED STATES	NETHERLANDS	SOUTH KOREA	GERMANY	HONG KONG	FRANCE	UNITED KINGDOM
58.9%	16.8%	13.9%	6.1%	1.8%	1.3%	1.1%

*As of Dec. 30, 2022

Index Value By Company Type





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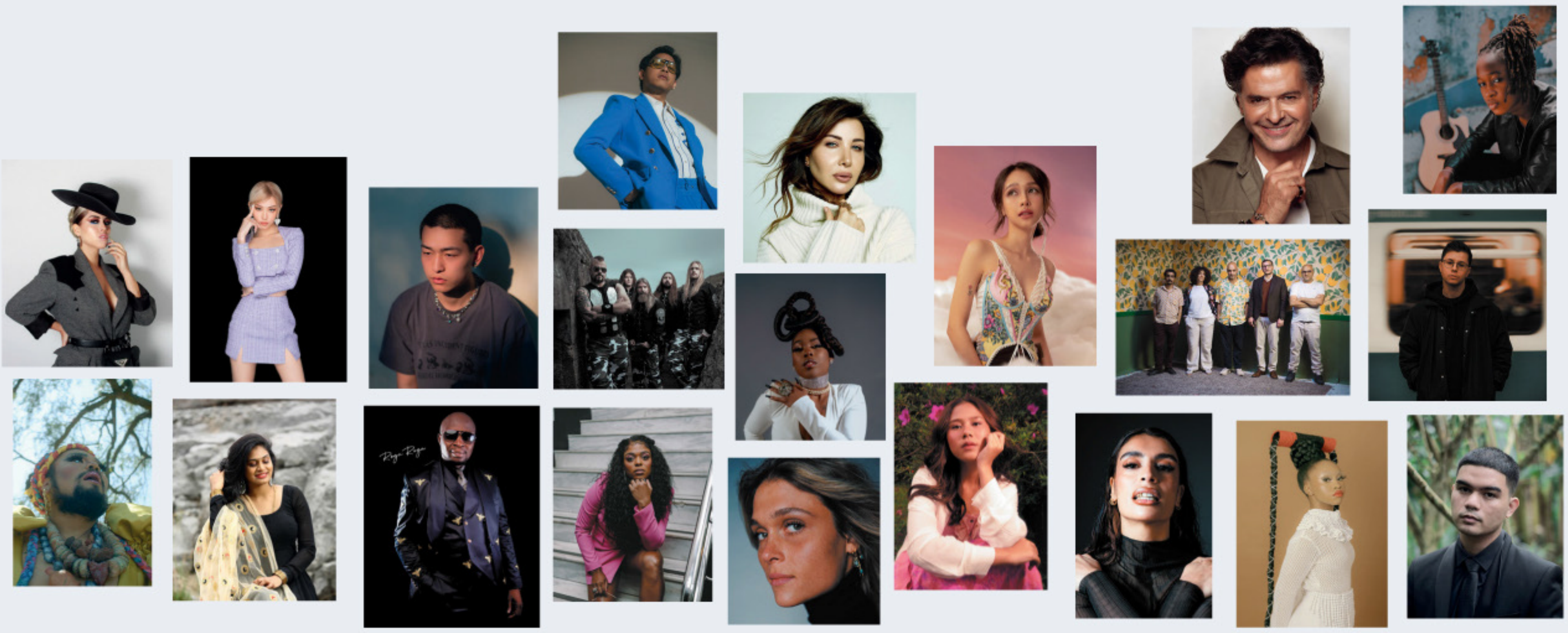

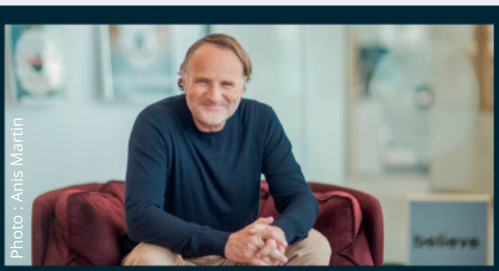

Photo : Anis Martin

"Thank you Billboard for recognizing Believe and the power of independence"

Denis Ladegaillerie, CEO & Founder, Believe

www.believe.com

From The Desk Of...

Jangwon Lee

CEO, BEYOND MUSIC

BY GLENN PEOPLES

PHOTOGRAPHED BY WUJIN CHO

Lee photographed Jan. 16
at Beyond Music in Seoul.

Dawn Ostroff exited **Spotify** as chief content and advertising business officer.

Cindy Mabe was named chairman/CEO of **Universal Music Group Nashville**, succeeding **Mike Dungan**.

JANGWON LEE'S life in music began in typical Korean fashion. "All the kids in my generation grew up with the piano at some point in their lives," Lee says over the phone from Seoul. His love of the instrument continued beyond childhood with a piano duo, The Serendipity, but has taken a back seat to serial entrepreneurism.

While studying business administration at Seoul National University, Lee co-founded Campusdal, a food delivery app. Then, after two years in the Korean air force, he founded Mapiacompany, a technology firm that operates three online platforms for independent musicians to sell digital sheet music. The experience set the stage for Lee's remaking of Korea's music intellectual property (IP) business.

"It gave me the legal knowledge that was necessary to start my new business — the publishing, the copyright laws, how to monetize, how to distribute the royalties," Lee says.

Now, Lee is the CEO of 2-year-old Beyond Music, a music investment firm with 26,000 copyrights and about $250 million under management. In 2021, Beyond Music created Asia's first song fund with support from institutional investors including KB Securities, Base Investment and Maven Growth Partners. Last year, it added funding from the electronics and entertainment company Dreamus.

In 2022, Lee doubled down on Korean content by launching an exchange-traded fund focused on Korean entertainment companies, the KPOP and Korean Entertainment ETF. Prominent Korean music companies HYBE, SM Entertainment and JYP Entertainment are in its portfolio, but it also includes Studio Dragon, a TV studio; Naver, owner of messaging app Line; and Kakao, owner of Korea's largest music subscription service, Melon.

In the West, investment money has been flowing heavily into music IP for more than a decade, especially in the last five years. It seems like the practice took root in Korea much later. Why do you think that is?

In 2017-18, when Hipgnosis started, there were very few precedents for Korean capital markets. You've got to understand the market, the nomenclature, the industry network. You have to know the nooks and crannies of the IP business. And also, you need to have a financial grasp, the understanding of capital markets, how to raise capital, how to structure the company, how to build, how to do tax-efficient modeling, IRR [internal rate of return] predictions, quantitative valuations. This is very much a quantitative business, whereas the understanding of the IP business is a relatively qualitative business. So, these are polar opposites in terms of business characteristics. In the past, I don't think in Korea there was a team that really embodied these polar opposites.

We have people from PwC, KPMG, KKR and Morgan Stanley on our team. We have producers and someone who used to be a top-level executive of the largest music value chain company in Korea. I think that was why we were first to scale, to be able to build and raise funds from very conservative institutional capital of Korean or Asian private equity and limited partner network.

Streaming is driving growth in global recorded music and publishing revenue, and that growth has helped attract new investors and more investment in general. Is streaming also the main factor behind increased investor interest in music IP in Korea?

Yes. I think it's twofold. No. 1: streaming in the domestic market. Korea ranked [at] No. 6 in terms of market size for music globally. Japan is No. 2. Add Japan and Korea together, it almost equals the European Union. So it is a big market on its own, and local growth here is definitely driving part of it. Another part is Korean content's market share in the global music industry. In the past, Korean music rights' primary source of revenue was domestic usage, and therefore domestic growth was the only tailwind. But now we see the market share of Korean music growing exponentially year over year in other parts of Asia and moreover in Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa regions, Europe, North America. Not just BTS and Blackpink, but more midtier artists. You become fans of Korean music through those more hallmark artists, but you end up trickling down to other more long tail or indie artists as well. And all the markets have been benefiting.

You have a large catalog. Do some of your less popular songs have commercial potential outside of Korea?

We have a mix of more global, more well-received catalogs and older, Korean-focused catalogs. The former obviously is a direct beneficiary of such a market growth trend. The latter, to a lesser degree, is also benefiting. It's surprising that songs on Spotify that are not as famous as BTS at all are getting relative hype from other parts of Asia, and we see it for some of our older catalog as well. I don't know how they were discovered, but on YouTube playlists, on YouTube comments, we see Spanish, we see French, we see it with Southeast Asian languages for songs we own that are 10 to 15 years old.

Multiples and valuations have risen a lot over the last few years. What's the Korean market like right now? Is it as heated as other markets?

It is more heated than before, but to my knowledge, the blended multiple acquisition average used to be between 20 and 30 times. Now with the higher interest rate, multiples are still within the high teens, like 17, 18, 19, or at least like 15. But in Korea, or at least for us, our acquisition multiple, the blended average, is still below 10. So, we have been able to acquire very good assets. We think they are not lesser than their U.S. or U.K. counterparts at all. So, from a quantitative viewpoint, these don't necessarily have to be valued at such a discrepancy. But I think it's a newer market here, and therefore there's less competition.

Is it safe to assume that you'll encounter more competition in the coming years?

I'm hoping not. But from a reasonable standpoint, I do see that may be unavoidable. But it's a good thing for us, because it will also help with our existing catalog valuing up.

What do you do to create additional value for the IP you purchase? Do you actively manage, market and promote the catalog — what Hipgnosis calls "song management"?

Whatever Hipgnosis is doing, we're doing it essentially, whether it be synch, remixes, copyright, better revenue collection techniques. We put our methodologies into two main categories: active management and passive management. We define passive as collecting what was already ours but was somehow being lost due to Content ID not being perfectly managed by YouTube itself. So we employ additional music-pattern recognition — tech companies around the world — to do better collection for our existing catalog, which I know Hipgnosis is also doing. We try to find and mix a better lineup of distribution companies — intermediary publishers, etc. — to maximize our revenue while minimizing the middleman fee. For active, we're doing remakes. We've already done a dozen remakes of our songs. I think two are now in the top 100 charts for Korean music. These are songs that were published 16 years ago, so after acquisition, we made remakes of the songs with new, up-and-rising artists in Korea. By remaking the songs, we hold the new assets as well as our existing assets. We've also worked with media channels in Korea to do music-related shows.

You recently purchased your first major U.S. acquisition: the catalog of producer-songwriter Greg Wells. To do this, you set up a U.S. subsidiary. Do you plan on creating subsidiaries in other countries to pursue acquisitions elsewhere?

Yes, for sure. The U.S. was a symbolic move for us. Our targets, however, lie toward lower-multiple opportunities. So, basically, Asia. We might set up subsidiaries. We might get direct acquisition from our Korean entity. But positioning ourselves as a more Asia-focused, Asia-Pacific music aggregator is our next step.

What might surprise people about the Korean music market?

The market size. For starters, it's larger than most European countries — larger than Canada, Mexico or most Latin American countries, or even countries with more population like Indonesia. I think it's bigger than Italy. Korea is really an advanced country. I can say that with more certainty now than I would have been able to seven or eight years ago.

How much of South Korea's music market depends on the ability of K-pop to keep growing as much as it has in recent years?

That is a topic of interest for Korean media and Korean industry specialists as well — whether this is a one-hit wonder, a short-lived irregularity or a trend. People have been internally questioning, or doubting, the longevity of the trend. This issue has been raised for five, six years.

Every year, there's someone who says, "OK, you know, this cannot sustain. Maybe this is the peak. The next year, it might be difficult." But the last five or six years have seen more growth every year, surpassing everyone's expectation. This does have a kind of faith component, and I do have faith. I'm biased. But I think my bias stands with multiple consecutive years of a proven record. There's no other country, outside of the U.S., that spends and reinvests as much money for better-quality music production as Korea. I'm very, very optimistic that this is not a one-time thing, but is a trend that will stick around at least for the next 10 years.

> "The Korean music market is larger than most European countries — larger than Canada, Mexico or most Latin American countries, or even countries with more population like Indonesia."

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Clockwise from top: JELEEL!, Cochise, Destroy Lonely, Yeat and SoFaygo.

Rage Against The Machine

The hip-hop subgenre known as rage has already spawned streaming hits. Can a crop of new artists push it further into the mainstream?

BY ELIAS LEIGHT // ILLUSTRATION BY RICARDO SANTOS

JELEEL!: ALEXIS BELHUMEUR. COCHISE: AMINE BASHIR. DESTROY: JAMES "JMP" PEREIRA. YEAT: MATT TY. SOFAYGO: LE3AY.

IN 2020, TRENTON KYLE WAS working as a librarian, and he "would come home and just make beats every day," he recalls. One night, he combined searing synthesizers and degraded drums into a bulldozing beat and cold-emailed it to rising rapper SoFaygo, who eventually added vocals and put the track out that October as "Off the Map." "People went nuts," remembers Arshan Jawaid, founder of Kids Take Over, an Instagram page and YouTube channel that interviews rising rappers.

Soon after, Trippie Redd started to tease an incendiary track called "Miss the Rage," which arrived in May 2021 and also built around a scraping, triumphant synth melody. By the end of that year, "Miss the Rage" had earned over 200 million on-demand streams, according to Luminate. And together with "Off the Map," the song played a key role in popularizing a new hip-hop subgenre: rage.

The list of rappers affiliated with rage has exploded in the subsequent 18 months, and several seem poised to become stars in 2023. The most notable example is Yeat, the Oregon native who earned over 2 billion on-demand streams last year with unruly songs full of laser-gun electronics and eccentric slang. Meanwhile, Destroy Lonely's gleaming, synth-slathered title track to his August album, *NO STYLIST*, has become the Atlanta rapper's most successful single to date, soundtracking over 165,000 TikTok videos and earning 35 million on-demand streams.

Established stars have also taken note of rage's potent sound: YoungBoy Never Broke Again started 2023 with a top 10 album, *I Rest My Case*, that nods to the genre's gnashing synths and rumbly low end. The rapper "is pushing [rage] even more into the mainstream than it already was," says Kyle, who produced "Not My Friend" on the new project.

> **"TODAY, YOU SEE A SONG AND LISTEN FOR ABOUT THREE SECONDS TO DETERMINE, 'IS IT GOOD ENOUGH?' WITH THE RAGE BEATS, THE SYNTHS ALWAYS CATCH YOUR EAR RIGHT AWAY."**
>
> **—ARSHAN JAWAID, KIDS TAKE OVER**

While hip-hop producers have been mixing volatile ingredients in beats for years, searching for the most combustible combinations, rage is heavily indebted to the rowdy wing of SoundCloud rap that burst onto the mainstream six years ago. One artist who emerged from that scene is an especially important influence: Playboi Carti, who boasts over 15 million monthly listeners on Spotify alone. Some of his songs offer a template of sorts for what is now dubbed rage: The bass hits like hurled cinder blocks while the Day-Glo melodies seem plucked from the *Mario Bros.* soundtrack. Carti himself appeared with Redd on "Miss the Rage," which helped give the style a name.

As a subgenre title, rage sounds pretty straightforward — anger, aggression, bricks through windows. But Ben Baker, who manages rage-adjacent rap artist Slump6s and producer Maajins, says the sound can include "headbanging stuff you mosh to at a concert" as well as tracks that are "slower and more melodic." (Importantly, many rappers connected to rage also traffick in multiple styles.) "The thing that ties it all together is those heavy synths and super heavy 808s," adds Jawaid.

This production palette helps rage stand out on the short-form video platforms that play an important role in modern music discovery. "Today, you're scrolling and you see a song and listen for about three seconds to determine, 'Is it good enough?' " Jawaid continues. "With the rage beats, the synths always catch your ear right away."

As a result, "this community and sound is getting a lot of attention," says Jordan Weller, head of artist and investor relations at indify, a platform that helps independent acts find investors. And not just from stars like YoungBoy Never Broke Again; many rappers who release rage singles have forged deals with major labels.

Tana, who scored a record deal in 2021 with Republic in partnership with Galactic Records, says his battering single "Antisocial" (which has over 100 million streams) is "one of the pioneer songs for the rage sound." Slump6s, who is featured on the hit, also signed with Republic in partnership with Field Trip, the latter of which inked Yeat in partnership with Geffen Records. Other labels have gotten involved, including 10K Projects (JELEEL!), Columbia (Cochise) and Carti's own label, Opium, which has signed Ken Carson and Destroy Lonely, both in partnership with Interscope.

Several of these artists will release new projects in the first half of 2023, looking to build on their initial success. "I went to the Destroy Lonely show in L.A. at the Hollywood Palladium [last November], and it was sold out," Baker says. "He doesn't yet have a song that has been on the *Billboard* charts — but he has a much stronger fan base than some artists who do." **b**

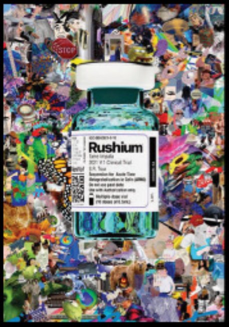
Tame Impala's Parker onstage in 2022.

INSIDE LOOK

Making Tours Pop

▷ Five years ago, award-winning electronic music DJ-producer Jesse Rose and hit songwriter-producer Jesse Rogg decided to launch a global agency to represent creative directors. "We just realized that there was no structure to the world of creative direction," says Rogg. Having previously worked well in the studio together, Rose says they figured they would work just as well as business partners and, in 2018, formed the Original Creative Agency.

Today, OCA represents over 50 creative directors — or "architects," as Rose and Rogg say — with clients including Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, Christina Aguilera, Tame Impala and Steve Lacy. And while the agency's creatives work across mediums from music videos to styling to album art, looking at the year ahead, the pair predicts the live space will become a much bigger part of business. "Now people are coming to us and asking us to produce their tours, starting from the creative," says Rose. "Which makes sense because our job is to make a story for a show."



Tame Impala's Rushium tour poster.

The two are confident that storytelling — both on and offstage — will be key to 2023's most successful treks. Rose recalls speaking with Tame Impala's Kevin Parker ahead of the band's *Slow Rush* tour, initially planned in 2020, about how to make the outing feel fresh in 2022. Their solution was to build an entire campaign around the tour. Creative director Ryder Ripps came up with the idea for Rushium, a fictitious pharmaceutical company pushing "rush pills" that appeared on posters, merchandise and the sides of trucks. As for Lamar, the pair praises the way his 2022 Glastonbury headlining set (creative-directed by Mike Carson, along with Lamar and Dave Free) "told a story through movement rather than over-the-top stage design," relying on two groups of dancers, says Rose. Most effective, he recalls, was the finale, during which Lamar chanted, "Godspeed for women's rights," as blood dripped from his thorny crown.

At a time when the live space is more competitive than ever, Rogg adds that such effective campaigning and messaging help set a tour apart — and cites a significant return on investment, too. Plus, adds Rose, the approach has recently helped OCA form relationships with nearly every major agency. "Artists and creatives — the great ones, at least — are always the ones coming up with what's next," says Rogg. "So we're quite mindful of only representing the folks who are those trendsetters. They understand the bigger picture — and not just over one campaign, but across a whole career." —LYNDSEY HAVENS

PARKER: MAIRO CINQUETTI/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET/GETTY IMAGES. RUSHIUM: RYDER RIPPS.

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CHRISTIAN BRESLAUER

VIDEO DIRECTOR

Growing up in South Florida, the closest Christian Breslauer got to Hollywood was a nearby beach named after it. The cinephile, 31, looked up to renowned film director David Fincher — who helmed music videos for Madonna and Billy Idol early in his career — and after high school, he started directing clips for local artists. He moved to California in 2016 with his sights set on working with London Alley Entertainment, a full-service production company behind award-winning videos for artists including Kendrick Lamar ("Alright") and Logic ("1-800-273-8255"). Breslauer jokingly recalls that he reached out to founder/executive producer Luga Podesta dozens of times before first working with the company on a 2019 Cîroc commercial. However, London Alley didn't start representing him until the following year, after Podesta saw the video for Roddy Ricch's "The Box," which earned an MTV Video Music Award nomination for best hip-hop video. "Our job as a company is seeing a director's career long term instead of just per project," says Podesta. Since then, Breslauer has become a go-to creator of visuals that are equally eye-popping and purposeful, working with The Weeknd, Doja Cat and Lil Nas X. (The latter's "Industry Baby" clip with Jack Harlow won three VMAs.) Most recently, Breslauer directed the video for SZA's "Kill Bill," which has over 16 million views. "We try to build little Marvel universes for every artist I work with," he says. "That's why artists like to come back and keep working with me." —HERAN MAMO

THE COLLABORATORS

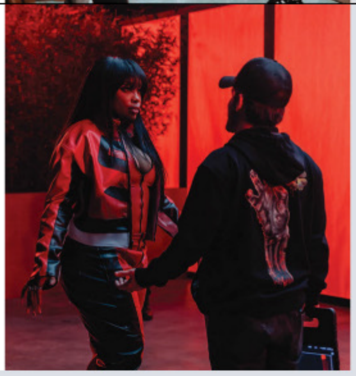
"FREAKY DEAKY"
Tyga x Doja Cat

After Tyga texted Breslauer about shooting a "futuristic" video for a Doja Cat collaboration from his forthcoming album, Breslauer imagined a sexy cat-and-mouse game, with various traps during a late-night rendezvous. The lyrics inspired some of them, including "Black Barbie, perfect and you gnarly," which reminded Breslauer of a scene from Joe Dante's 1998 film *Small Soldiers* when action figures punched out of their plastic boxes. "I put a lot of intention in breaking down the song," he says.

"ABOUT DAMN TIME"
Lizzo

Last year, Lizzo's team asked Breslauer to direct multiple videos for her Grammy-nominated album *Special*. But once "About Damn Time" went viral, that took priority. The two set out to make something uplifting, with Breslauer running with Lizzo's idea to open in a support group setting. It won video for good at the 2022 VMAs, with Lizzo dubbing Breslauer "Tittylauer" during her speech. "We have so many funny moments," he says. "She brings such a bubbly energy where you can't help but love her."

"KILL BILL"
SZA



For SZA's latest video, Breslauer wanted to incorporate the singer's idea of shibari rope bondage during the outro — a second sequence soundtracked by fellow *SOS* track "Seek & Destroy" — while referencing Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* films. "It seemed too on the nose to have an Uma [Thurman] cameo, but Vivica [A. Fox] was right to me," says Breslauer of one of its driving scenes. "She's got the swagger." That shot wrapped around 5 a.m. as part of a 19-hour-long shoot that happened days before Christmas, with the video dropping two weeks later — "the fastest video we've done in a while," says Podesta.

ONE TO WATCH

RAYE

FROM London

AGE 25

LABEL N/A

FOUNDATION RAYE only ever aspired to be a musician: "Make it work, figure it out" has been her mantra from age 7. Influenced by her musically inclined family — including her Ghanaian-Swiss mother, who sang in church as a child, and her grandfather, a songwriter — she enrolled at South London's BRIT School, home to alumni such as Amy Winehouse, Adele and FKA twigs. But she dropped out after two years, eager to forge her own path. "I felt like it was important not to be taught how to do 'that thing,' " she says. "It's something you've got to learn with your own voice and own way."

DISCOVERY As a teenager, RAYE would take the train after class to songwriting sessions, often "working with 35-year-old white guys," she remembers. "It was important to get my skills up." She self-released her first mixtape in 2014 and signed to Polydor in the United Kingdom soon after. Within a few years, RAYE scored her breakthrough on London producer Jax's "You Don't Know Me." But, she says, some of those early wins were bittersweet. "As soon as the [record] deal was signed, I was ushered down a path sonically that I didn't necessarily intend for myself." She tweeted her frustrations in 2021, saying the label wouldn't let her release an album, and parted ways with Polydor that year to go independent.

FUTURE In June 2022, RAYE signed with distribution and artist services company Human Re Sources ahead of her long-awaited debut album, *My 21st Century Blues* (due Feb. 3). "Escapism," a standout dance-rap fusion with 070 Shake, arrived in October and became RAYE's first Billboard Hot 100 hit, reaching a No. 22 high. The song powers the 13-track set, half of which she co-produced. "Some of these topics, my close friends don't even know about me," she says, alluding to themes of body dysmorphia, toxic relationships, substance abuse and sexual violence. She began 2023 opening for Lewis Capaldi on his U.K. arena tour and will hit the road with Kali Uchis in April. "I wasn't gunning for big chart success," she says. "I was putting out music I love, now that I'm in complete control of my career." —NEENA ROUHANI

BRESLAUER, DOJA CAT: VIRISA YONG. LIZZO, SZA: MICAYLA CATANZARITI. RAYE: SEBASTIAN KAPFHAMMER.

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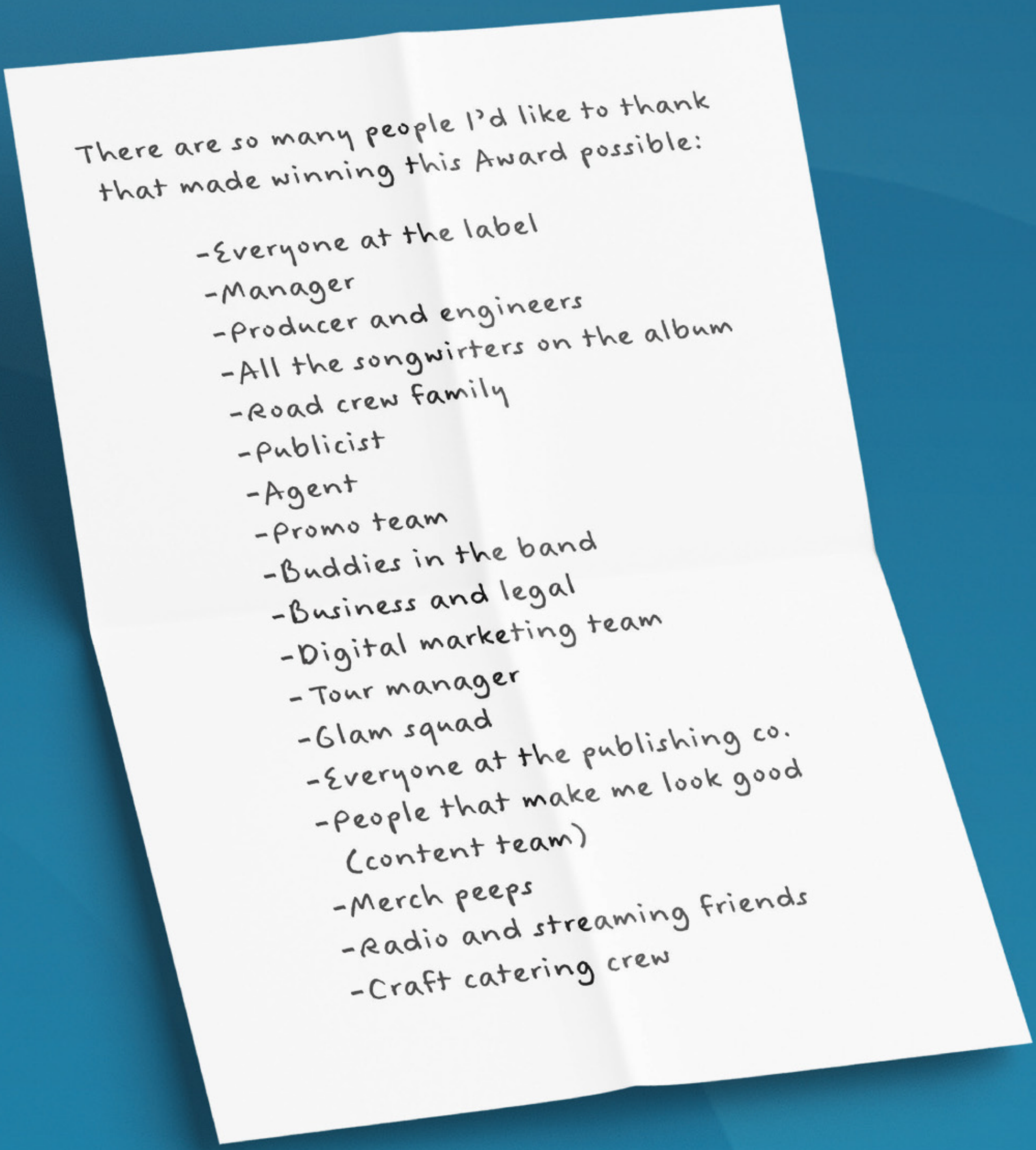

There are so many people I'd like to thank
that made winning this Award possible:

-Everyone at the label
-Manager
-Producer and engineers
-All the songwirters on the album
-Road crew family
-Publicist
-Agent
-Promo team
-Buddies in the band
-Business and legal
-Digital marketing team
-Tour manager
-Glam squad
-Everyone at the publishing co.
-People that make me look good
(content team)
-Merch peeps
-Radio and streaming friends
-Craft catering crew

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YoungBoy Never Broke Again
photographed Dec. 16, 2022, in Utah.

DELIVERANCE

Despite spurning traditional models of music industry success, **YoungBoy Never Broke Again** has become one of the planet's most popular and prolific rappers. Now, under house arrest in Utah, the iconoclastic musician is atoning for his past — and contemplating what comes next

BY MEAGHAN GARVEY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DIWANG VALDEZ

UP A WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD on the edge of Salt Lake City, past snow-dusted pines and freshly shoveled driveways, through a wrought iron gate that opens at the command of an armed guard yawning in a pickup truck, sits a handful of mansions designed like rustic ski resorts — and one that looks like a modernist mall. Another security guard idles at the end of the outlier's heated driveway, which slopes past a garage where Maybachs and McLarens sit alongside muddy, toddler-sized four-wheelers and a terrarium housing a sleeping bearded dragon. At the front door, an inflatable Santa stands sentry, holding a sign that warns, "Nine Days Until Christmas!"

On a clear day like today, you can look out the living room's floor-to-ceiling windows, over the icy swimming pool and presently invisible dirt bike track below, and the entirety of the Salt Lake Valley spreads out before you like an overturned snow globe. Inside, the space is all white and sparsely furnished, decorated with a pair of spindly Christmas trees, a half-dozen painted portraits — in one, a smiling young man feeds his daughter a cheeseburger — and an enormous plaque that glints in the sunlight and reads, "100 RIAA Gold/Platinum Certifications," and, in larger letters, "YoungBoy Never Broke Again." Its recipient, who introduces himself as Kentrell, sits quietly beneath it as a motherly woman named Quintina, who is not his mother but his financial adviser, paints his fingernails black.

The neighbors have yet to figure out who exactly it is that moved in just over a year ago: a rail-thin 23-year-old with faded face tattoos and a stable of luxury vehicles that never leave the garage. Should they learn that he is signed to Motown Records and makes music as YoungBoy Never Broke Again, it's likely they would still draw a blank. (A middle-aged blonde from the mansion next door cranes her neck from the window of her SUV to gawk at the camera crew unloading outside for today's cover shoot.) And it's true that the artist born Kentrell DeSean Gaulden, whom fans call YoungBoy or simply YB, has practically zero mainstream presence: He's not on the radio, scarcely performs live, regularly deactivates his social media accounts and shies away from the press.

Yet in an extreme and emblematic case of streaming-era stardom, YoungBoy is one of the most popular and prolific rappers on the planet. Since breaking out from his hometown of Baton Rouge, La., at age 15 — already sounding like a world-weary veteran who had absorbed a lifetime of pain — he has landed 96 entries on the Billboard Hot 100 and 26 projects on the Billboard 200. (Of the latter, 12 charted in the top 10, and four went to No. 1.) Of the whopping eight full-length projects he released in 2022 alone, five reached the top 10; his latest, January's *I Rest My Case*, debuted at No. 9. YoungBoy was the third most-streamed artist in the United States last year (according to Luminate), behind Drake and Taylor Swift, and currently sits at No. 1 on YouTube's Top Artists page, where he has charted for the last 309 weeks. After deducting a presumed 10% management fee, *Billboard* estimates YoungBoy's take-home pay from artist and publishing streaming royalties averaged between $8.7 million and $13.4 million annually over the last three years, depending on the structure of his publishing contract and level of artist royalty his recording contract pays out. The NBA's coolest young team, the Memphis Grizzlies, warms up to his music almost exclusively.

He's known for churning out releases with machine-like efficiency and for the legal battles that have haunted his career from day one, to the extent that both feel like essential components of the art itself. As a public figure, he's inscrutable, but in song, he comes alive — equal parts outlaw and confidant, commiserating with listeners' struggles and declaring vendettas in the same breath. And though his path may strike some as counterintuitive, YoungBoy's perpetual underdog status only galvanizes his die-hard supporters, for whom aggrievement has become a calling card, regularly spamming comment sections in frantic defense of their favorite.

Since moving to Utah, YoungBoy has left his house exactly zero times; an ankle monitor will trigger if he so much as crosses the end of his driveway. After fleeing police, who had stopped him in Los Angeles with a federal warrant stemming from a 2020 arrest — where he was one of 16 people picked up on felony drug and weapons charges at a video shoot — he spent most of 2021 in a Louisiana jail. In October 2021, a judge granted him permission to serve house arrest in Salt Lake City at the request of his lawyers. (Hence the security team, whose presence is to enforce the terms of his incarceration as much as for his protection. Those terms include a limit of three preapproved visitors at a time, turning today's shoot into an elaborate exercise in consolidation.) The 2020 arrest was the latest in a string of allegations that began when YoungBoy was 15. Last year, he was found not guilty in one of his two federal gun trials; the other is ongoing.

YoungBoy lives here with Jazlyn Mychelle, whom he quietly married in the first week of 2023, and their two children: a 17-month-old named Alice (after his grandmother) and a newborn boy, Klemenza (named for a character in *The Godfather* whose loyalty the rapper admires). They are the youngest of the 23-year-old YoungBoy's 10 children. The other eight live with their seven respective mothers. Most people in his position would be counting down the days until freedom, but besides the fact that his "purposeless" car collection is steadily depreciating in value, YoungBoy is in no rush to return to the world. "This is the best thing that ever happened to me," he says with an expensive-looking smile, having traded his diamond grill for pearly veneers, as his nail polish dries in the sunlight.

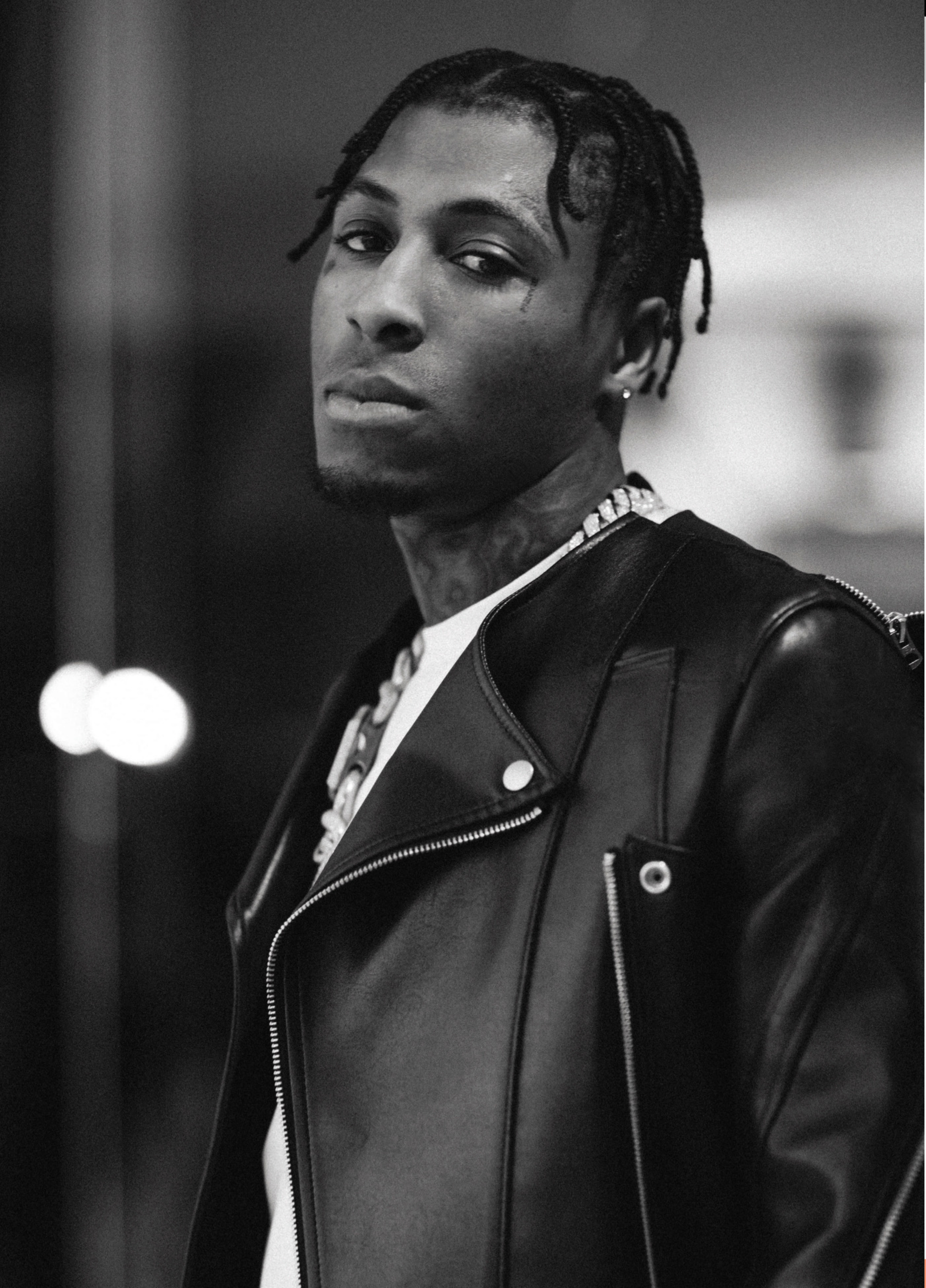
Even inside, YoungBoy rarely hangs out upstairs. He usually stays up until dawn in the basement, playing Xbox or recording songs all night, never touching pen to paper — instead, he freestyles line by line according to what's weighing on his mind. By his estimate, over 1,000 unreleased tracks currently sit in the vaults. His nocturnal tendencies are a "protection thing," he explains. "It has been like that since I was 15: I've got to be somewhere where I actually know no one is inside the room," he says in a voice I have to lean in to hear, a near whisper that feels worlds away from the fearless squawk that booms out in his songs, hurling threats at a seemingly endless number of enemies. "I like to just stay in one small space where I don't have to worry about anything that's not safe."

For a while, he had a habit of sleeping in the garage — in the Tesla, where he could turn on the heat without fear of death by carbon monoxide poisoning, and where he and his engineer, XO, would sometimes record. Lately, he stays up smoking cigars in the basement — his last remaining vice, he says. "Nighttime, when everybody's asleep — it's the most peaceful time ever inside of life to me," he whispers. "Nighttime, when it's dark and nothing's moving but the wildlife and the crooks." He has seen his share of deer and rabbits scurrying around the property, and though he has yet to spy a bobcat, the security guards have. He watches for intruders, too, a matter of routine. What he likes best is that it's peaceful here, and that "it's very far from home."

KENTRELL GAULDEN wrote his first song in fourth grade, and he still remembers how it started. He giggles as he launches in: "It goes, 'Pussy n—s always in my face/Bang, bang, bang, there go the murder case.' And I keep saying it." Growing up in north Baton Rouge, his mother, an amateur rapper herself under the name Ms. Sherhonda, would bring Kentrell and his older sister to watch her record in a neighbor's home studio. His father was sentenced to 55 years for armed robbery when he was 8. Years later, when a teenage Gaulden was locked up himself for a 2014 robbery charge, he received a letter from another jail — from his father, telling his son about his own musical dabblings. "I never had a Plan B. This is what I was set on becoming," YoungBoy says, his narrow frame engulfed in a skull-patterned puffer jacket, a tangle of diamonds flashing underneath. His early songs inspired a school friend to write his own, and YoungBoy smiles remembering the two giddily trading rhymes before class. "But he died," he adds, barely breaking his gaze. "If I'm not mistaken, they was robbing someone, and as he took off, he met his consequence."

The Baton Rouge in YoungBoy's raps is rife with mortal danger, a place where death is an old acquaintance and betrayal lurks around every corner. On 2016's "38 Baby," around the time the rapper's local buzz was going national, YoungBoy half-sang, half-rapped that he "got the law up on my ass, demons up in my dreams," claiming to not even step in the recording booth unarmed. It was startling to see who was behind such a nihilistic worldview: a gangly teen whose baby face was marked three times across the forehead with scars from a halo brace he wore after breaking his neck as a toddler. Artist Partner Group CEO Mike Caren (who worked for years with YoungBoy's former label, Atlantic, and the artist's own Never Broke Again imprint, and remains his publisher), remembers his first time seeing the "38 Baby" video.

"The intensity was so powerful," Caren recalls. "He was youthful and seasoned at the same time. He had presence, a natural sense of melody, and he painted an entire picture of his world." A bitter brand of authenticity emerged from the contrast of YoungBoy's boyishness and the obvious trauma that hovered over him like a black cloud. To hear one of



his songs was to listen in on the shockingly intimate confessions of someone forced into adulthood against his will, and to witness his expression catch up to his experience in real time.

You could cherry-pick the history of Louisiana hip-hop and cobble together something like a precedent for YoungBoy: the swampy street tales and prolific output of the labels No Limit and Cash Money; the embrace of balladry, bounce and traumatized blues; the pure indifference to industry protocols. YoungBoy's early releases gestured to 20-odd years of Baton Rouge rap, from Trill Entertainment's dark-sided club jams to Kevin Gates' warbled bloodletting — music that was sometimes about women or money but mostly, and most profoundly, about pain. In recent years, YoungBoy's rapping has matured into a style that stands apart from his predecessors, veering off into complicated rhythms and electrifying spoken-word diatribes, as on last year's eight-minute missive "This Not a Song (This for My Supporters)," where he warns listeners not to be fooled by the glamour of gangster rap. Still, the old pain sears through nearly every freestyled verse.

It was his "pain music" in particular that first drew the attention of Kyle "Montana" Claiborne, a wisecracking 36-year-old Baton Rouge native. YoungBoy's songs were only available on YouTube in 2016 when the two met, and though Montana was twice YoungBoy's age, the music hit him hard. "I wasn't a rapper, but I wanted to live like a rapper," he says, and with no real industry experience, he became the 16-year-old's right-hand man, driving him hours to play shows for $500 a pop. YoungBoy's buzz was steadily building on YouTube and Instagram "back when followers was real and organic," Montana stresses. Meanwhile, he was recording enough music to drop an album per week, propelled by a private urgency.

The Never Broke Again label was created in Montana's name since YoungBoy was a minor; today, they share ownership of the company, which partnered with Motown in 2021, a year ahead of YoungBoy's solo deal with the label. In late 2016, the pair traveled to New Orleans to meet in a parking lot with Fee Banks, who had helped Lil Wayne launch his Young Money label and managed Gates into stardom. Banks saw in YoungBoy a similar greatness and immediately took over as his manager.

"YoungBoy was moving fast, but he had a lot of drama attached to him," Banks recalls. "Soon as I got in touch with him, he went to jail. Anything he got into, we got him out, and every time he got out of jail, he'd gotten bigger. Throughout all the trials and tribulations, we kept it moving, kept recording, kept shooting videos and stayed down."

YoungBoy's buzz had caught the ear of another Louisiana native: Bryan "Birdman" Williams, who co-founded Cash Money Records and mentored a young Lil Wayne, among many others. In his signature twang, Williams recalls flying a teenage YoungBoy to Miami, where they recorded daily for two weeks, working on what eventually became their 2021 collaborative album, *From the Bayou*. "Watching how fast he do music and the value of the music, I saw a lot of similarities between him and Wayne," he says. "I seen stardom in him, but I knew it was a process."

Williams made it a mission to impress upon the teenager that he had a choice: the life he was raised in or the music. "I once was somebody like him and had to gamble my life. I wanted to show him that he could really survive off his talent," he continues. "You could go to jail, or you could die, or you could try to be somebody." As he does with Wayne, he refers to YoungBoy as a son.

By the time labels had entered a bidding war, YoungBoy was a cult hero with eight mixtapes under his belt. He was also a teenage father of three being tried as an adult for attempted murder, facing a life sentence without parole. He had been apprehended before a show in Austin, accused of a nonfatal Baton Rouge shooting that occurred hours after a friend's murder; after six months awaiting trial in a Louisiana prison, he ultimately took a plea deal. At his 2017 sentencing — by which point he had committed to a $2 million deal with Atlantic Records — the judge cited his music as a means of "normalizing violence," one of many recent instances of rap lyrics being used as evidence in criminal proceedings. With your talent, she lectured, comes responsibility. He received a suspended 10-year prison term with three years of probation. More disturbing allegations emerged in the years to follow, including kidnapping, assault and weapons charges tied to a 2018 incident recorded in a hotel hallway showing the rapper attacking his girlfriend.

One night in prison while YoungBoy was on lockdown ("For no disciplinary reason — it was because of who I was"), he prayed to see his late grandmother one last time. He had lived in her home for much of his childhood, crying on the occasions when he had to return to his mom's house. Her name, Alice Gaulden, frequently appears in his lyrics, and her massive painted portrait hangs by the fireplace; after our interview, I catch him smiling beneath it in silence, one hand resting on the image of her face. "And I remember, I ain't crazy — she *hugged* me. I felt her," he recalls softly, and despite his serene expression, his legs begin to tremble, at first subtly, then unignorably. "After that, I didn't want to go back to sleep. I didn't even care about the situation I was in. I felt like I was secure."

His grandmother died in 2010, and YoungBoy was sent to a group home. "I used to get beat up inside the group home for no reason," he continues as the shaking intensifies, though his quiet voice never falters. "The other boys would put their hands on me, and I would look up like, 'Why are you hitting me, bro? What'd I do?' It made me discover another side of me that I never glorified or liked. I found out how to be the person that you don't want to do that with. [Before then], I never understood all the evilness or wrong because I was showered by so much love from this one person."

By now, YoungBoy is shaking from head to toe with alarming intensity, his jewelry audibly rattling. "It's not going to stop," he calmly replies when I suggest we take a break. Quintina, who began as his accountant and now appears to also function as a surrogate mother, kneels beside his chair to hold his hand. "I'm OK," YoungBoy assures her. Composing himself, though the trembling continues, he focuses his gaze.

"I'm very scared right now," he confesses. "It's just natural. I'm not big on people." For most of his life, expressing or explaining himself has taken place behind a microphone, alone. "I never knew why once I walked on the stage, I could get it done and leave — but I am *terrified* of people. People are cruel. This is a *cruel* place." He swivels in his seat toward the blue and white panorama behind him. "You've got to be thankful for it. It's very beautiful, you know? There's so much you can experience inside of it. But it is a very cruel place. And it's not my home." The smile he cracks has a strange effect — sweetness embedded in a wince.

"I don't want to know what it means to die — but do we actually die, or do we go on to the *real* life? What if we're all just asleep right now?" he wonders aloud as the shaking dies down. "It's all a big test, I think."

PERHAPS YOU'RE WONDERING how a Baton Rouge rapper on house arrest finds himself deep in the heart of Mormon country. Those listening closely may have noticed YoungBoy name-dropping Utah's capital from the beginning: "Take a trip to Salt Lake City, cross the mountain, 'cause that's called living," he chirped on "Kickin Shit" seven years ago. He first came here as a boy, he explains, as part of a youth outreach group initiative, and became very close with one of its leaders, a Utah native he declines to name, though he mentions she was married at the time to a professional baseball player. Today, he refers to the woman as his mom. "She's a wonderful person. She's just there when I need her," he says softly. "She christened me, if I'm not mistaken, and then she brought me back here to meet her family. When I got here, it was always my goal: I'm going to move here. I'm going to have a home here. This is where my family is going to be." Courtroom testimony from his 2021 hearing shows his attorneys reasoning that a permanent move to Utah would keep their client away from trouble; after some initial skepticism, the judge agreed.

The past few months of YoungBoy songs are full of curious Utah-isms, like the Book of Mormon passage that opens his video for "Hi Haters" — "Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death" — or a recent line mentioning missionaries visiting his home. "I'm surprised they didn't come in the process of this [interview]," he says when I ask about the latter reference. The first time the Mormon missionaries appeared on his doorstep, weeks ago, YoungBoy instinctively sent them away. Then he had second thoughts: "I wanted help very badly. I needed a friend. And it hit me."

When they returned, he invited them in, explaining the things about himself he was desperate to change. "It was just cool to see someone with a different mindset that had nothing to do with business or money — just these wonderful souls," he recounts. He has come to look forward to their daily visits, during which they discuss the Book of Mormon and "make sure my heart is in the right space" for his official baptism into the Church of Jesus Christ the Latter-day Saints, a rite that forgives past sins through repentance, according to Mormon theology. He's saving the ceremony for after his ankle monitor is removed. "Even when my negative thoughts come back, when I do want to tell them, 'Not today,' I just don't let nothing stop it," he says. (Later I learn that during our talk, two carloads of chipper, clean-cut missionaries in their early 20s did, in fact, appear at the property's gate and were turned away only due to the visitor limit.)

As for whether the missionaries know who he is, YoungBoy doesn't ask; frankly, it could go either way. He epitomizes "invisible music stardom," the streaming-era phenomenon in which artists have massive fan bases but relatively minor pop culture footprints, illustrating a disjunction between what's promoted and what is truly resonating. His particular success is often attributed to his relentless productivity, in some ways more like that of a "content creator" than a traditional musician. "I have never heard of a fan saying that their favorite artist is putting out too much music unless the quality goes down," says Caren, noting YoungBoy's impressive consistency.

As for his lack of a ubiquitous hit — for all of his chart-topping full-lengths and 96 Hot 100 entries, the highest YoungBoy has charted as a sole lead artist has been No. 28, for 2020's "Lil Top" and 2021's "Bad Morning" — Caren argues he has had them, just not in the places you'd expect. "He moved too fast for the radio. He was always on to the next thing. You can't stick around and promote the same song for five months when you're making multiple albums in that time period." And though his numbers are mighty across all streaming platforms (on Spotify, he has over 17 million monthly listeners), his popularity is most closely associated with YouTube, where his fans first found him, and where he can upload new music directly to his 12.1 million subscribers, bypassing the mainstream industry apparatus entirely.

It was YoungBoy's peerless work ethic that first grabbed the attention of Motown vp of A&R Kenoe Jordan. The Grammy-nominated producer and fellow Baton Rouge native had monitored the rapper's career from the jump, impressed by what the teenager and his Never Broke Again label had accomplished with limited resources. "In Louisiana, we have the most talented musicians in the world, but the window of opportunity is very small," Jordan says from the work-in-progress Never Broke Again headquarters in Houston: half office building, half giant garage full of lethal-looking ATVs and bench press racks. After signing a global joint venture with the Never Broke Again label, Jordan was determined to sign YoungBoy himself, who had voiced frustration with Atlantic in some since-deleted online comments that had some fans petitioning Atlantic to release him from his deal. Jordan announced YoungBoy's signing with Motown in October 2022, following the completion of his contract with Atlantic.

Jordan calls YoungBoy and company some of the hardest-working people in the industry, known to spring an impromptu album on the label without warning. "His formula is already there," Jordan adds. "He knows what he wants. You just have to make sure you're able to deliver on the things that he asks you to do." YoungBoy's partners have simply learned to trust him whether or not they see the vision. Montana laughs remembering nights spent driving to undisclosed locations: "He do some of the oddest things, and

nobody knows why he’s doing it but him.”

As strategies go, YoungBoy’s makes sense — flood the market, circumvent the system, keep the fans and the algorithms satiated — but it doesn’t entirely explain why he puts out as much music as he does. What analysts would credit to a master plan, YoungBoy describes as a compulsion. “It’s a disease,” he says starkly. “Literally, I cannot help myself. I tell myself sometimes, ‘I’m not going to drop until months from now,’ but it’s addictive. I wish I knew when I was younger how unhealthy this was for me. Whatever type of energy I had inside me, I would’ve pushed it toward something else.” From someone whose music seems like his truest form of release, it’s an astonishing claim. “The music is therapy, but I can’t stop it when I want,” he goes on, sounding almost ashamed. “And the lifestyle is just a big distraction from your real purpose.”

As if some private dam has broken, YoungBoy’s words now spill out urgently. “I’m at a point now in my life where I just know hurting people is not the way, and I feel very manipulated, even at this moment,” he says, his brown eyes flashing. “I was set on being the greatest at what I did and what I spoke about. Man, I was flooded with millions of dollars from the time I was 16 all the way to this point, and I woke up one morning like, ‘Damn. They *got* me. They made me do their dirty work.’ Man, look at the shit I put in these people’s ears.” By “they,” he’s alluding to the rappers he once looked up to as examples of how to live and those who bankroll them. His voice wavers, then steadies. “I think about how many lives I actually am responsible for when it comes to my music. How many girls I got feeling like if you don’t go about a situation that your boyfriend’s bringing on you in *his* way, you’re wrong? How many people have put this shit in their ears and actually went and hurt someone? Or how many kids felt like they needed to tote a gun and walked out the house and toted it the wrong way? Now he’s fixing to sit there and do years of his life that he can’t get back.”

A shiver streaks through him again, rattling his knees. “I was brought up around a lot of fucked-up shit — that’s what I knew, and that’s what I gave back to the world,” YoungBoy continues, spitting out his words like they’re sour. “I was like, ‘Fuck the world before they fuck you.’ I was a child, you know? And now I know better, so it ain’t no excuse at all for how I carry on today.” His gaze doesn’t flinch. “It took lots of time to make my music strong enough to get it to where I could captivate you. I promise to clean whatever I can clean, but it’s going to take time, just like it took time for me to get it to that point.” He takes a sharp breath, then whispers: “I was wrong. And I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

“IT’S A DISEASE. LITERALLY, I CANNOT HELP MYSELF. IT’S ADDICTIVE. THE MUSIC IS THERAPY, BUT I CAN’T STOP IT WHEN I WANT.”

—YOUNGBOY NEVER BROKE AGAIN

YOUNGBOY’S MUSIC is commonly understood as brooding, ruthless and retaliatory. A running meme shows his fans moving through life with comic aggression: belligerently whipping clean laundry into the basket, holding up a rubber duck at gunpoint in the bath. That’s an oversimplification of the range of his subject matter — family, betrayal, loyalty, loss — but it isn’t entirely off the mark, either; on YouTube, listeners have compiled extensive playlists with titles like “1 Hour of Violent NBA YoungBoy Music (Part 4).” It’s a specter that looms over the bulk of his catalog, from early videos where his teenage friends wave Glocks at the camera to songs like last year’s “I Hate YoungBoy,” where he fires warning shots at half the industry and drops ominous bars like “I’m gon’ be rich inside my casket once my time gone.” It’s tough to imagine what a pacifist YoungBoy song might sound like, much less an entire album of it, and recent attempts at anti-violence messaging haven’t landed the way he intended: “As I start to promote the peace and say, ‘Stop the violence,’ I think I’m inciting a riot,” he rapped on “This Not a Song, This for My Supporters” last year.

“Pacifist YoungBoy” isn’t fully realized on his latest record, *I Rest My Case* — his first for Motown, which he dropped with almost no promotion on Jan. 6. (It was the day before his private wedding to Mychelle, a 20-year-old beauty YouTuber who quietly tends to the babies in between posing for a few photos, at his insistence, during the cover shoot.) But it is a step in that direction, an album that mostly traffics in extravagant stunting over buzz-saw synths associated with the EDM/trap hybrid known as rage music. To celebrate its release, YoungBoy invited around 50 giddy fans over for a snowball fight and video shoot, jumping atop his Bentley truck to blast album opener “Black” from the court-approved safety of the driveway. The noisy crowd dispersed only when a couple emerged from next door to request they keep it down. “It’s a lot of old people here, really,” a poncho-clad blonde — the same one who had driven curiously past the house weeks before — cheerfully tells a TikTok reporter. “If he comes and asks, would you spare him a cup of flour?” the TikToker asks. “Of course we would!” she replies.

I Rest My Case is an obvious departure, lyrically and aesthetically, from what YoungBoy’s fans are used to, and across the internet, early reactions were mixed: Some praised their favorite rapper’s innovation, others longed for the old days. YoungBoy’s previous album, *The Last Slimeto*, debuted last August at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 with 108,000 equivalent album units, according to Luminate; just five months later, *I Rest My Case* debuted at No. 9 with 29,000 equivalent album units. “Be completely honest: Do you want YB back on drugs toting guns if it means we gon get that old YB back?” read one Reddit post.

YoungBoy expected this. “I’m very curious to see how the world goes about me now,” he contemplated weeks before in his living room, adding that he tried to avoid the usual mentions of guns, though there are still a few. He has thought a lot about what attracted people to his music until now: “They listened because of who I supposedly was or showed I was and what I rapped about. Now it’s nail polish and face paint, and the music is not the same.” (Lately, alongside the black nails, he and Mychelle like to paint their faces like goth Jokers and skulk around the property at night.) “What if they don’t like me now?” he wonders, fiddling with a diamond pinky ring. “You can’t be on top forever, you know? Because I’m not changing. I will not be provoked, I will not be broken, and I’m *not* going back to who I used to be. Accept it or not — I ain’t going back.” YoungBoy breaks into a smile. “I’m only going to get more groovy from here.” He’s already preparing his next album, which he’s calling *Don’t Try This at Home*.

Only once does YoungBoy remember it snowing in Baton Rouge; here in the mountains this time of year, it sits at least two feet deep daily. After checking briefly on the babies, he lights a cigar and beckons me through the garage and down toward the wooded dirt bike track, yelping for XO to join us. Out here, it’s a postcard: white trees, white mountains, ice blue sky. Everyone’s up to their knees in snow, and no one’s more excited about it than YoungBoy, whose ripped white jeans and jacket have now become camouflage. He points animatedly to where the bike path goes, a clearing where you can do doughnuts. “Five K for a snow angel!” he dares XO, who came hardly prepared in a hoodie and slides. “Just fall back! But at least put your hood on.” XO topples backward into a puff of powder and sweeps out an angel silhouette to YoungBoy’s delight, and the two laugh as they tramp back uphill.

As for what will happen when his ankle monitor is removed, YoungBoy would rather not think about it. No date is currently scheduled for his remaining federal trial, according to an email from his lawyer, because “the government is appealing the court’s ruling on our motion to suppress evidence, and that matter is pending before the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.” They declined to comment on his bail conditions. “The day I walk out this door and am free to do what I want, it’s going to be a lot of doing, or it will be done *to* me,” YoungBoy says. “So I’m not rushing back to that. I have a family.” He doesn’t plan to leave Utah anytime soon, though eventually, he would like to buy a place with even more land “where no one knows what’s going on on it.” He has spoken previously about his disinterest in touring but might reconsider if the shows were overseas where he could see some new places— he has always wanted to visit the Eiffel Tower, especially since watching *Ratatouille*. Asked what he looks forward to most, YoungBoy hesitates for a moment. “Change,” he replies softly. “I am very curious of the person who I shall become.”

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RENAISSANCE MAN

After 20 years of penning hit singles behind the scenes, **The-Dream** is still changing the sound of pop — and may step into the spotlight come Grammy night

BY KRISTIN ROBINSON

LOVE IS THE BRIDGE between you and everything,’ ” Terius Nash reads aloud, gesturing to the words scrawled in the corner of an art piece. “Ah!” he claps. “I love it. These quotes are completely amazing.”

The 45-year-old hit songwriter and artist, better known as The-Dream, sighs wistfully as he plops down on a peach-colored velvet love seat, which sits just beneath the artwork. Hung in an ornate gold frame, the piece depicts a group of people intertwined in collective embrace — a painting style reminiscent of Renaissance-era masterpieces — juxtaposed in front of an urban brick wall that’s splattered with various phrases written in technicolor graffiti. The artwork consumes an entire wall of the sitting room in The-Dream’s so-called “creative house” in the upscale Buckhead area of Atlanta. Otherwise, the room is completely bare — nothing but tall ceilings and crisp marble floors.

The-Dream adjusts his powder blue bucket hat and peers around his shoulder, back at the phrase. “I like how the longer you think about it,” he says, “the more you realize you don’t fully know what it means.” Its significance is determined by an individual’s perspective and understanding — just like the artwork itself, which he purchased three years ago at Eden Art Gallery in New York. With its hologram surface, its phrases are obscured when entering the room from the left... but from where The-Dream sits on the far right, the portrait shifts, its words clearly revealed.

The-Dream himself has unlocked some of the defining phrases in 21st century popular music, helping to craft smashes like Beyoncé’s “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It),” Rihanna’s “Umbrella,” Justin Bieber’s “Baby” and Mariah Carey’s “Obsessed,” among many others. He has been present for studio sessions where the meaning of a word has expanded, then permeated popular culture in a different shape. He laughs when reminiscing about Beyoncé’s 2013 self-love anthem “Flawless,” and how he didn’t realize the full impact those eight letters could carry until he saw them needlepointed in scrolling cursive on a throw pillow following its release. “You don’t realize how many people wanted to capture that [feeling] until you see

ELLINGTON HAMMOND

your lyrics on a pillow!" he says.

"This guy just writes a title that, when you read it, you know you have to listen to the song out of curiosity alone," explains Christopher "Tricky" Stewart, The-Dream's longtime writing and production partner. "I think he has an unmatched ability to figure out a unique lyrical perspective that can make an artist not only have a hit song, but a song that defines culture and the artist's career. Something they can build on for the rest of their lives."

Though The-Dream has been a behind-the-scenes force for the past two decades, he speaks to *Billboard* on the precipice of a career pinnacle, as evidenced by his presence at the 2023 Grammy Awards. He's nominated in three of the Big Four categories — record, song and album of the year — for his work on Beyoncé's seventh solo full-length, *Renaissance*, and its smash lead single, "Break My Soul." The acclaimed album, along with his contributions to Pusha T's *It's Almost Dry* and Brent Faiyaz's *Wasteland*, also earned The-Dream a nod in the inaugural songwriter of the year, non-classical category, where he will compete against Amy Allen, Nija Charles, Tobias Jesso Jr. and Laura Veltz.

"This means everything," says Steven Victor — who manages The-Dream in addition to Pusha T, Nigo and others — of the new Grammy category, which he says The-Dream has advocated for for years. To Victor, a great songwriter can embody the points of view of many different types of artists — rap greats like Jay-Z and Pusha T, vocal powerhouses like Carey and Mary J. Blige, pop headliners like Bieber and Britney Spears, four-quadrant superstars like Beyoncé and Rihanna — and shape-shift into them regardless of their genre or personal identity. The-Dream, he vouches, is the best at this in the whole business.

"No one is going to think through these songs more than me," The-Dream declares. Musical ideas often haunt him through the night, he explains, as more concepts, words and melodies flood his consciousness hours after a studio session ends. His creativity gnaws at him: He recently began attending fashion design classes at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and pulls out a collection of expert drawings — a sketch of a clementine, another of a skull.

"I drew a lot as a kid," The-Dream says with a smile. When asked what he likes to draw most, he shrugs and thinks back to his overall creative approach: "I feel like I'm better when I have an assignment."

> **"WHEN WE LOOK BACK ON THE FIRST 25 YEARS OF THIS MILLENNIUM, I KNOW HIS SONGS ARE GOING TO BE THE ONES PEOPLE TALK ABOUT."**
>
> **—MERCK MERCURIADIS, HIPGNOSIS**

WE HAD NO IDEA what was happening at the time," The-Dream says of growing up during the popularization of Atlanta's music scene in the 1990s, when Southern rap reached the mainstream and acts like TLC and Usher took over pop. "It makes more sense to look back and understand it now." He recalls watching the success of his neighbor and elementary school classmate T.I. and attending night classes with his pal André 3000 as a teen. "I don't know what he did or why he was there," he says with a laugh of the OutKast icon, "but I sure know I was flunking!"

Shortly after some of his acquaintances found musical success in Atlanta, The-Dream signed a publishing deal in 2001 with local mogul Laney Stewart, older brother of Tricky, and scored a writing credit on the B2K song "Everything." Two years later, The-Dream linked up with Tricky — already producing hits for Mya and Blu Cantrell — and helped create the 2003 Britney Spears-Madonna team-up "Me Against the Music." "It was explosive to write with him from the very beginning," says Tricky. The pair complemented each other: Tricky was the perfectionist producer, and The-Dream was the emotive songwriter.

The pair's brand of rhythmic pop took off in the second half of the decade, with "Umbrella" and "Single Ladies" reaching the top of the Billboard Hot 100 in 2007 and 2008, respectively, and "Baby" making Bieber a teen superstar in 2010. Meanwhile, The-Dream launched his career as an artist, signing with Def Jam and releasing a trio of R&B albums between 2007 and 2010: *Love/Hate*, *Love vs. Money* and *Love King* have earned a combined 2.25 million equivalent album units, according to Luminate.

His recording career has been sporadic since then, his focus constantly pulled back to creating hits for other artists. The-Dream says it's difficult to define why he's able to write so clearly about the experiences of others, "but really it's my job to understand what the artist is going through, even if they don't understand it yet," he explains. " 'Umbrella' is a love story, but for some reason, it feels like there is some misery in there too. Like, why do you need to assure this person they can count on you? Maybe, underneath, you know you haven't had anyone to count on in your life, so you know what it means to be in that place."

By 2018, the songwriter had turned that approach into one of the most bankable blueprints in popular music: over 70 Hot 100 entries as a songwriter, including 14 top 10 hits and five No. 1s, with 21 career Grammy nom-

Clockwise from left: Pusha T (left) and The-Dream in 2018; The-Dream at the 2017 BET Experience; Tricky (left) and The-Dream at the ASCAP Rhythm & Soul Awards in 2009.

PUSHA T: JOHNNY NUNEZ/WIREIMAGE. THE-DREAM: HARMONY GERBER/WIREIMAGE. STEWART: LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE.

inations and five wins. That year, he sold 75% of his catalog, including his writing credits and solo releases, to Merck Mercuriadis' Hipgnosis for a reported $23 million. It was the song fund's first-ever catalog purchase.

"I wanted him to be the Dr. Dre to my Jimmy Iovine, if you like," says Mercuriadis with a grin. "When we look back on the first 25 years of this millennium, I know his songs are going to be the ones people talk about."

THROUGHOUT THE 2010s, The-Dream shared the studio with all kinds of artists, but working with women vocalists was always his penchant. In the past, he has spoken about how the early death of his mother, who died of cancer when he was 15, gave him a "soft spot" when interacting with women. "There's no such thing as a day with no grieving," he says now, his eyes softening as he looks down at his sneakers.

After his mother's death, he was put under the watchful eye of his grandfather, a hard-scrabble cement mason who grew up in the Jim Crow South. The-Dream fondly recalls the days of listening to his grandfather talking "actively about how to make things well, looking at [them] from all different angles," over games of pinochle with fellow masons. There's an invisible throughline, he explains, between the ethos of a master builder, that of an artistic genius like da Vinci, and that of a songwriter like himself.

"When thinking about an artist like Beyoncé, I want to try to consider all the different ways this could reach people," he says. "I want the song to matter to Beyoncé standing onstage, the person in the front row of the show and that person who's in the rafters, who barely made it in, got a ticket from a friend last minute. I have to write for each one of them."

"Single Ladies," from Beyoncé's 2008 album, *I Am... Sasha Fierce*, was the start of a long-term creative partnership and friendship between The-Dream and the superstar, who has tapped the songwriter to help craft at least one song from each of her subsequent albums — "Love on Top" from 2011's *4*, "Partition" from 2013's *Beyoncé* and "6 Inch" from 2016's *Lemonade*. ("Both Bey and I are Virgos," The-Dream jokes, alluding to the astrological sign's association with perfectionism.) For her latest release, *Renaissance*, The-Dream is one of the architects behind all but two of the album's 16 tracks.

"Bey wanted to bring everyone together — that was the first thing on the board," explains The-Dream of Beyoncé's mission for her first solo album in six years. Following a tumultuous global period, he says, "It doesn't matter who you are, we all know we were hurting," and that the bounce, funk, house and all-around maximalist dance of *Renaissance* was intended as collective therapy.

For the album's focal point, "Break My Soul," The-Dream and Tricky teamed up to sketch out the single and then took it to Beyoncé, who "transformed it" into a No. 1 hit, says Tricky. "Dream and Bey's closeness and attention to detail got us to a place with that song that we couldn't have gotten [to] without that bond."

Of course, many other collaborators also helped to finalize each *Renaissance* track — which songwriter Diane Warren questioned following the album's July release. She took to Twitter to write, "How can there be 24 writers on a song?... This isn't meant as shade, I'm just curious." The-Dream replied in defense, schooling Warren with an explanation of sampling, its ties to Black culture and the lack of economic resources for Black musicians.

"By the way, I think she's one of the greatest," says The-Dream of Warren a few months after the exchange. "Sometimes [songwriters] lose that feeling, that connection to what art was all about in the first place. Really, it's whatever it takes to give the world something good, so if that takes a whole gang of people... so be it."

The way The-Dream speaks about collectively creating *Renaissance* mirrors his views on the role of the church as the birthplace of generations of talented Atlanta musicians, some known, many more unknown. "For us Southern Black folks... everybody was musical, everyone singing those hymns from back then," he says with the fervor of a preacher at the pulpit. "I love hearing the gathering of people, huddled together, humming a song. No time signature. No industry. No three minutes and 30 seconds."

Incorporating Southern culture's sense of collectivism is not new for The-Dream and Houston-born Beyoncé, but *Renaissance* stands as their wholehearted embrace of the principle. "We learned to not be too big to call," he says, reflecting on the process of inviting others to collaborate on the album. "If you think Grace Jones would sound great on something? Call. Nile Rodgers would be cool on this? Call."

As a songwriter, The-Dream doesn't control when artists release the songs he has helped pen — the timing is serendipitous, or "like lightning in a bottle," as he puts it. So it's a bit of kismet that, after his years spent fighting for a songwriting category, one of the biggest projects of his career is nominated in the award's inaugural year.

"I keep thinking, 'How is this happening?' " he asks. Win or lose, The-Dream is basking in the recognition. "It feels good," he says. "Too good." ■

FLYOVER COUNTRY

The Grammys' Big Four categories have more nominees than ever.
Why is country music still underrepresented?

BY MELINDA NEWMAN ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW HANCOCK

IN 2018, THE RECORDING ACADEMY increased the number of nominees in the Big Four Grammy categories — album, song and record of the year and best new artist — from five to eight. Then, three years later, it boosted the pool from eight to 10.

These expansions were made to recognize more music creators and to represent more genres, according to the academy — yet for country artists, the benefits have thus far been nonexistent.

For the five Grammy Award nomination cycles (for ceremonies taking place in 2019-2023) since the first increase, there have been 196 total Big Four nominations, yet only six have gone to mainstream country artists or projects, with only one victory: Kacey Musgraves' album of the year trophy for *Golden Hour* in 2019. In the five cycles before the increase (2014-2018), country artists scored seven nominations of the far smaller 125 total nods.

For the 65th Grammys, which will take place Feb. 5 in Los Angeles, country music is completely absent from the Big Four.

Genre classification can be blurry, but for this story, *Billboard* counted nominations that went to an artist or music that appears on *Billboard*'s Country Airplay, Hot Country Songs and Top Country Albums charts or is traditionally considered country. For 2023, that means Brandi Carlile's album and record of the year nods don't count in the country tally (though her 2020 song of the year nomination for co-writing Tanya Tucker's "Bring Me My Flowers Now" did); same with song of the year nominee Taylor Swift, who is now considered a pop artist despite her country start. Best new artist nominee Molly Tuttle plays bluegrass, and while the genre is a branch of country music, her music doesn't appear on those *Billboard* charts.

Previous years also have not-quite-country outliers: Maren Morris' record of the year nomination for appearing with Zedd and Grey on "The Middle" didn't count in the 2019-2023 tally since it was a pop hit. Though Sturgill Simpson doesn't receive mainstream country radio play, *A Sailor's Guide to Earth* debuted at No. 1 on the Top Country Albums chart and the set won the Grammy for best country album in 2017, so its album of the year nomination counts in the 2014-2018 tally. Similarly, Margo Price, whose albums chart on Top Country Albums, counts for her 2019 best new artist nomination.

Shelly Maree, the Recording Academy's country awards manager, considers the low recent total cyclical, in part. "Right now, we're in another lull period where you're not hearing country played on top 40 [radio], so you're not really hearing anybody break through like that, [while] rap and hip-hop and dance are having huge moments," she says. "You can really kind of plop down into any decade or any five-year period in our top four nominations and you're going to see reflected what is of the era at that moment."

But for the country community, the absence of representation in the general field illuminates a bigger concern: that the genre doesn't receive the broader attention it deserves, hurting its chances at nominations for those trophies. While the academy deems all Grammys equal, the four general-field categories carry more prestige and receive greater media attention.

"Generally speaking, country music remains outside of the large pop music tent, which includes many of the contemporary genres like pop and hip-hop and rock," says Beverly Keel, Middle Tennessee State University dean of the College of Media and Entertainment and a former MCA Records Nashville executive. "I think a lot of Grammy voters may not even listen to country, and I think there is, in many voters' minds, still a stigma about country that it's not as sophisticated, hokey, the music of the conservatives."

Additionally, despite the notable rise in streaming among younger country artists, the music lacks the global reach some pop-oriented genres enjoy. "Most country stars are not international stars like Beyoncé, Rihanna, Bruno Mars," Keel says. "Country is largely limited to the United States and Canada, so it doesn't have the reach, whereas a pop song may be No. 1 in 20 countries."

As Mary Hilliard Harrington, manager for Dierks Bentley and Elle King, notes by email: "Even prior to 2019, country has been grossly underrepresented in the main categories. It has always been a problem." The three mainstream country artists with the most career nominations are Willie Nelson (56), Dolly Parton (53) and Vince Gill (47) — but Nelson and Gill have each landed only one Big Four nomination (in 1983 and 2008, respectively), while Parton has earned two (most recently in 1988).

The current generation of country hit-makers hasn't fared much better. Miranda Lambert, who is nominated in all four country categories this year, has never received a Big Four nomination despite 27 career nods. Only one of Chris Stapleton's 17 nominations has been in the general field, when *Traveller* received an album of the year nod for the 2016 Grammys. And one of country's biggest new stars, Morgan Wallen, didn't compete at all in 2022: He was shut out from Grammy nominations after his 2021 smash *Dangerous: The Double Album* was mired in controversy.

Country music has recently fared best in the new artist category, with Price, Luke Combs, Ingrid Andress and

Clockwise from top: Lambert, Bryan, Stapleton and Wilson.

LAMBERT: ROBERT ASCROFT. BRYAN: MICKEY BERNAL/GETTY IMAGES. STAPLETON: JASON DAVIS/GETTY IMAGES. WILSON: NICK RAU.

Jimmie Allen nabbing nominations since 2019. For the 2023 awards, Zach Bryan, the top new country artist on *Billboard*'s year-end charts, and rising star Lainey Wilson were both considered leading contenders for best new artist, and their respective labels (Warner Records and BBR Music Group) ran campaigns accordingly. But when nominations were announced in November, neither earned a best new artist nod, nor did anyone else from the genre. Though Wilson made significant press and TV appearances in an effort to reach as broad an audience as possible, Bryan made almost none, which sources say may have limited his exposure to Grammy voters.

Significantly, the overall voting pool lacks enough country advocates to consistently propel the genre into the Big Four without strong support from allies. Of the current 12,000-plus voting members, less than 10% identify with the country genre, according to the academy, compared with pop (23%), jazz (16%), rock (15%), R&B (15%), American roots (13%), alternative (10%) and classical (10%). (Voters can identify with as many genres as they want.) All voting members can cast ballots for the Big Four.

While qualifying creators can still apply to join the academy, following the recommendation of its Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, in 2018 the academy began inviting creators to join as voting members. The move was meant to make the voting pool more reflective of the diverse creative community and initially focused on women, people of color and those under 40.

In recent years, however, potential new members who identify as country have received fewer invitations than peers in other popular genres. Of the 2,710 invitations extended in 2021, 9% of recipients identified with the country genre, with 13 other genres ranking higher. The highest percentage of invited voters identified as pop (29%), followed by R&B (23%), jazz (18%), alternative (18%), rock (16%) and rap (15%). In 2022, the academy welcomed nearly 2,000 new voting members; 9% cited country as their focus, compared with pop (33%), R&B (22%), alternative (19%) and rap (15%).

The country community's easiest way to increase its odds would be by boosting its presence in the voting membership. "A really good place to start is talk to your friends and [ask], 'Are you a Recording Academy member?' And then step two is, 'Are you voting?,' " Maree says. "This year, we were really encouraging our active members to fulfill that responsibility and use their voices, especially [since] the first round of voting directly dictates our nominations now that we no longer have nominating committees. 'Are they voting?' is the first thing we always ask people when they have any kind of questions about what they see when it comes to nominations day."

Although Keel says a Grammy is "what people grow up dreaming about winning," for country artists, the conversation doesn't begin and end with one awards ceremony. More so than many other genres, country music has numerous awards shows to fete its own accomplishments, including the Country Music Association Awards, the Academy of Country Music Awards and the CMT Music Awards. Those ample additional opportunities to bring home trophies could help lessen the sting of a Grammy snub, Harrington says.

"At this point — because it's nothing new — [the omissions are] more of an eye roll than outrage," she says. "The country community is truly the best in terms of supporting its artists, celebrating great music and producing our own network television award shows. Being part of the Grammys is cool and a bucket list dream for a lot of artists, but we have it pretty good in Nashville. If we aren't invited to that party, we'll just throw our own."

BILLBOARD POWER

POWER IN A TIME OF TRANSFORMATION

BILLBOARD'S ANNUAL LIST OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY'S TOP PLAYERS REFLECTS A YEAR OF CHANGE — AND INTENSIFYING COMPETITION — WITH SHARPENED FOCUS ON THE LEADERS IN CHARGE

AS THE DISRUPTION of the pandemic began to ease last year — with artists returning to the road in force and much needed revenue beginning to flow again — music executives began to talk about the new normal in a business that exceeded $60 billion in 2022, according to *Billboard*'s estimate of total revenue generated by recorded music, publishing and concert grosses. That's a condition most of us in the industry understand well: the push and pull of business as usual alongside the challenges of transformation.

Change was afoot. Established players left CEO positions — Motown's Ethiopia Habtemariam; Universal Nashville and Warner Nashville chieftains Mike Dungan and John Esposito, respectively; Warner Music Group's Stephen Cooper was succeeded by former YouTube chief business officer Robert Kyncl, whose global perspective and tech-centric focus seem to make him well suited to navigate a business grappling with the ever-growing power of TikTok. No doubt TikTok was also on the mind of Lucian Grainge when he wrote to Universal Music Group staffers in his annual New Year's

TYPE ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN NAUMANN

2023

letter — a document pored over and dissected by much of the industry — of the need for a new business model to better serve music creators and the companies that support them.

The industry has talked about globalization for years, but never has it been so evident as in 2022. For the first time in 66 years, the top album on the year-end Billboard 200 was the all-Spanish-language release *Un Verano Sin Ti*, Bad Bunny's fourth album, which also earned him the top position on the Billboard Global 200 Artists recap for 2022. The Puerto Rican superstar has been guided by Noah Assad, an independent manager turned multisector mogul who is *Billboard*'s Executive of the Year.

Of course, the global success of Latin and K-pop artists wouldn't be possible without the reach of streaming, which continues to change music. The format's ability to connect artists and audiences across different territories is a key reason that labels are opening offices throughout Africa, South Asia and other regions as A&R executives scour the world for the next international stars. As Sony Music Group chairman Rob Stringer tells *Billboard* in this issue, "I don't take for granted any potential A&R source from around the world now. It is a global business, more than ever."

This year, change has also come to *Billboard*'s annual power list, which reinstates its original title, the Power 100. After much deliberation, *Billboard*'s editors and reporters have decided to hold a true mirror up to the industry, pinpointing the executives at 100 companies and organizations that exercised the most influence over the past 18 months. The team that compiled this list relied on data anywhere and everywhere it was available, with an emphasis on current market share, revenue, Billboard Boxscore tour grosses and year-end charts and rankings, which are powered by Luminate. (Our methodology is detailed at the end of this list.)

Our format has also changed, focusing on an industrywide top 30 ranking of executives, followed by rankings of the top players in key business sectors. (Those who appear in the top 30 are also ranked in their relevant sectors.) We distilled the number of executives honored at each company to those with the most power. In previous years, we expanded this list to spotlight the industry's efforts toward diversity and inclusion, as well as its overall growth. This year, though, we decided to show the leadership of the business as it is, not how we wish it would be. And it's clear that despite all the transformation that has occurred, more is needed. —FRANK DiGIACOMO

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

JO-ANN TORO

Noah Assad

CO-FOUNDER/CEO, RIMAS ENTERTAINMENT

His day-one management client, Bad Bunny, had historic success in the studio and on tour in 2022. But as he expands his empire, Assad's loyalty, hustle and foresight continue to pay dividends well beyond one star's wins

WHEN TICKETS FOR Bad Bunny's *El Último Tour del Mundo* arena tour went on presale in April 2021, his manager, Noah Assad, was cautiously optimistic.

"I thought we would do well, because it was post-pandemic and everyone wanted to go out, but we went on sale without really knowing — and we did it a year out for that very reason," says Assad.

For Assad, "doing well" has become synonymous with breaking some sort of record. But even he wasn't expecting Bad Bunny to have one of the most historic, record-setting runs for an artist in the history of the *Billboard* charts. *El Último Tour del Mundo*'s presale date became the top sales day for any tour on Ticketmaster since Beyoncé and Jay-Z's On the Run II tour went on sale in 2018, and the run sold out 480,000 tickets in less than a week.

Four months after *El Último Tour del Mundo* wrapped in April 2022, Bad Bunny embarked on his World's Hottest Tour stadium run, becoming the first artist to ever mount separate $100 million-plus tours in the same calendar year. Ultimately, his 81 concerts in 2022 grossed $434.9 million, the highest calendar-year total for an artist since Billboard Boxscore launched in the late 1980s. The tour broke local revenue records in 13 North American markets en route to becoming the biggest Latin tour ever.

Bad Bunny's chart dominance made him *Billboard*'s top artist of the year, by the numbers, the first Latin act and the first artist who records in a language other than English to earn the distinction. His album *Un Verano Sin Ti*, released in May on Assad's independent label, Rimas Entertainment, and distributed by The Orchard, became the first non-English set to ever top the year-end Billboard 200 Albums ranking and the first all-Spanish release nominated for album of the year at the Grammy Awards, one of Bad Bunny's three nods.

"I was very proud about that one, especially because it was 100% a Spanish-language album," says Assad. "It doesn't have even a verse in English."

On top of that, in April, Bad Bunny will become the first Latin act to headline Coachella. And, Assad, 32, is realizing some milestones of his own, including being named *Billboard*'s youngest-ever Executive of the Year and the first Latino to secure the honor.

His achievement underscores not only the growing worldwide popularity and profitabil-

> **“Noah is similar to Bad Bunny in that he’s also a unicorn. The guy’s going to create an empire, and he’s a man of his word.”**
>
> —HENRY CÁRDENAS ON ASSAD

ity of Latin music, but also shines a light on what an upstart independent can do — regardless of genre or the backing of a legacy company — when armed with guts, hustle, deep musical knowledge, loyalty and the confidence to break rules and create new ones.

Bad Bunny is signed to Assad’s label, Rimas Entertainment, which originated in 2014 as a digital marketing and distribution company. It has evolved to become a 100-plus-person operation with distribution from The Orchard, with a roster ranging from veterans (Arcángel, Jowell & Randy) to promising newcomers (Mora, Eladio Carrión), many of whom are signed to 360 deals. Rimas ended 2022 at No. 7 on *Billboard*’s year-end Top Labels chart and at No. 1 on the year-end Top Latin Labels chart, with 23 charting albums by seven artists besides Bad Bunny.

Assad also launched RSM Publishing, which is administered by Universal Music Publishing Group and was No. 1 on *Billboard*’s year-end Hot Latin Songs Publishers list. And while Bad Bunny is his most visible management client, Assad also started managing Karol G 18 months ago with his new management firm, Habibi, with stellar results. Her 2022 $trip Love tour, promoted by AEG Presents, grossed $69.9 million with 410,000 tickets sold across 33 arena shows in North America — the highest-earning U.S tour ever by a female Latin act, according to Billboard Boxscore.

“Noah has an unmatched understanding of his artists,” says Jody Gerson, chairman/CEO of UMPG. “His instincts about how to market and promote them, as he has done so well with Bad Bunny and Karol G, are among the best I’ve ever seen in the business. As an executive, Noah is loyal, honest, innovative and smart, and these are just some of the many traits that make him a fantastic partner.”

Though only 32, Assad considers himself a “semi-vet. I may be ‘new’ to a lot of people, but I’ve been at this for 12 years,” he says with a laugh. A self-professed reggaetón nerd with long blonde hair that matches his laid-back surfer vibe, Assad — born to a Lebanese father and a mother from St. Croix — grew up in Puerto Rico, and since seventh grade has been “consumed with reggaetón culture.” By 16, he was promoting house parties, booking the likes of Farruko before he became a big name and cultivating relationships with already established acts like Plan B’s Chencho Corleone. “Chencho was the first established artist to simply say yes to me,” says Assad, a favor that has paid dividends for Corleone; “Me Porto Bonito,” his smash collaboration on Bad Bunny’s *Un Verano Sin Ti*, became the first all-Spanish song to top *Billboard*’s Streaming Songs chart. That full-circle moment highlights Assad’s reputation for cultivating relationships with contacts to whom he stays loyal. “We work with everybody; we are always coexisting,” he told *Billboard* last year. Witness his deals with opposing teams at The Orchard and Universal, while his top touring acts — Bad Bunny and Karol G — work with Live Nation and AEG, respectively.

“Noah is similar to Bad Bunny in that he’s also a unicorn,” says Henry Cárdenas, the veteran promoter and founder of CMN, which produced and promoted Bad Bunny’s last two tours, including the stadium tour in partnership with Live Nation. “The guy’s going to create an empire, and he’s a man of his word. I compare him to the old managers, where we closed business with a handshake, and he’s appreciative. Where I’m concerned, he has continued to take me into account, and it harks back to the fact that I worked with him from the very beginning.”

While Assad’s success feels very of the moment — in keeping with his young acts, the relatively recent mainstream success of reggaetón and Bad Bunny’s fondness for releasing music with little or no notice — he’s actually a planner; like his famous client, he takes a long view on success. It wasn’t always this way. As a young promoter, Assad recalls struggling mightily to make a buck (and often getting “hustled”) in what he half-jokingly refers to as “the reggaetón depression era” of 2009-2016, when the music was largely consumed for free and money came almost solely from live shows.

“YouTube was the outlet that turned it into a commercial business,” says Assad, who says he struck an early deal with the platform to monetize the millions of views the music generated for many independent artists and eventually for his own — including a 22-year-old who called himself Bad Bunny. “I didn’t have the privilege to work with an artist who was already established, but I was very fortunate to have Bunny trust me and work with me. Bunny makes me look good,” he says. Alongside his artist, Assad began thinking long term, and even when his actions seem improvised, they are anything but. Take the one-two punch of back-to-back tours with a hit album in between, conceived after ticket prices to Bad Bunny’s arena tour started soaring just after they went on sale in 2021.

“We started getting the heat, but we didn’t think of stadiums until the summer,” says Assad, pointing out that Bad Bunny already had plans to release a new album when the arena tour wrapped. By October, a plan had been made: arenas in February, an album in May and a stadium tour in June to be announced in January with a series of humorous videos featuring Bad Bunny’s girlfriend, Gabriela Berlingari, and Spanish actor Mario Casas. “There’s a lot of pivoting along the way, but we still follow the plan,” says Assad. “And everything we do has to make sense. If it doesn’t make sense, even if it’s beautiful, we pass.”

“Noah is singular in his sense of the moment, commitment to a vision and fearlessness,” says UTA agent Jbeau Lewis, who books Bad Bunny and Karol G. “Noah understands his artists, he always plays the long game, and he’s unafraid to say no.”

Bad Bunny has said repeatedly that he plans to take a break after Coachella, from both recording and touring. But for Assad, the work of growing his business never slows. Last year, in partnership with The Orchard, he launched Sonar, a label for developing acts that already has deals with over 50 artists from around the world, including non-Latin acts. Assad also began a strategic alliance with Live Nation to develop new businesses outside of touring, including Gekko, the restaurant Bad Bunny opened in Miami in August with hospitality entrepreneur David Grutman. Most recently, he announced the launch of Rimas Sports, a stand-alone management company (name notwithstanding, it is not a division of Rimas Entertainment) whose client list already includes the Toronto Blue Jays’ Santiago Espinal and Diego Cartaya, a top prospect for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Assad says his biggest goal for 2023 has nothing to do with business, however. “I want to fly less, enjoy more and spend as much time as I can in Puerto Rico,” he says. “That’s my goal. People look at me and think that because of the hair I’m from Mississippi or something. But I’m just a kid from Carolina, Puerto Rico, who loves reggaetón.” —LEILA COBO

AUSTIN HARGRAVE

THE TOP 30

01

Lucian Grainge

CHAIRMAN/CEO

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

Now that the dust has settled on UMG's public listing, Grainge can focus solely on running the world's largest music company — and business has been booming. In October, UMG reported third-quarter earnings of 2.66 billion euros (approximately $2.9 billion), up 13.3% year over year in constant currency, a fifth-straight quarter of growth since the company spun off from Vivendi in fall 2021. And while the label group's market share has slipped — with a 33.57% current share in 2022, down from 37.89% in 2021 — it maintained a hold on the charts, with three of the top five most-streamed songs in the United States, six of the top 10 biggest albums of the year in the United States by consumption units and the No. 1 label of the year in current market share in Republic Records. "I think our biggest flaw is making it look easy," Grainge says. "And trust me, it's not easy."

UMG's past year was as much about setting the table for future success as it was about winning. The company began to see results from its investments in several sectors: spatial audio, with almost half of UMG's streaming consumption available in the immersive format; streamlined and expanded distribution offerings, with a new global corporate structure for Virgin and a 49% stake in independent distributor [PIAS]; expanded footprints in Africa, India and China; the acquisition of catalogs by Sting, Neil Diamond, Dr. Dre and Frank Zappa, as well as the licensing of North American merchandise rights for The Beatles; and a songwriting platform for TikTok creators, launched with Samsung and Simon Cowell, which is designed to promote new music creation.

Grainge sees more work to do in the coming year. In a speech at the All That Matters conference in October, he warned about the pervasive influence of TikTok amid rights holders' complaints about low payouts from that platform and urged the record business not to repeat past mistakes by allowing its music on outside platforms without appropriate remuneration. In a letter to staff in January, he called for an "updated model" for the music industry amid the unintended consequences of the streaming revolution, particularly the torrent of songs uploaded to every platform each day. "[We need] an innovative, 'artist-centric' model that values all subscribers and rewards the music they love," he wrote. "A model that will be a win for artists, fans and labels alike, and, at the same time, also enhances the value proposition of the platforms themselves."

What that will look like, however, will require "collaboration with all the players in the music community," he says. "I'm confident it can be done because it's in everyone's interest to move away from a model that, over time, has created bad incentives — which has resulted in an experience that is increasingly frustrating for artists and fans. Look, we're a music company: We stand for music and artists and I've spent my career focusing on quality and artistry, not white noise or 31-second clips or sounds to fall asleep to. Music is important. I'm a big believer in an environment where all artists have a shot." —DAN RYS

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 69.

> “There’s a mythology that labels are just about slapdash, one-off hits on TikTok. That’s nonsense. Artist development is absolutely at the heart of every single A&R affiliate we have.”
>
> –ROB STRINGER, SONY MUSIC GROUP

LABEL GROUPS

01

Lucian Grainge
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Boyd Muir
EXECUTIVE VP/CFO/PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

Will Tanous
EXECUTIVE VP/
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Michele Anthony
EXECUTIVE VP

Jeffrey Harleston
GENERAL COUNSEL/EXECUTIVE VP OF BUSINESS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Michael Nash
EXECUTIVE VP/CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER
Universal Music Group

See story, page 68.

02

Rob Stringer
CHAIRMAN
Sony Music Group

Kevin Kelleher
COO

Carmine Coppola
EXECUTIVE VP/CFO

Dennis Kooker
PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL DIGITAL BUSINESS AND U.S. SALES

Julie Swidler
EXECUTIVE VP OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS/
GENERAL COUNSEL
Sony Music Entertainment

See story, page 70.

03

Robert Kyncl
CEO

Max Lousada
CEO, RECORDED MUSIC

Eric Levin
EXECUTIVE VP/CFO

Paul Robinson
EXECUTIVE VP/GENERAL COUNSEL

Oana Ruxandra
CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER/
EXECUTIVE VP OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Warner Music Group

See stories, pages 74 and 88.

LABELS

01

Monte Lipman
FOUNDER/CEO

Avery Lipman
FOUNDER/COO

Jim Roppo
Wendy Goldstein
CO-PRESIDENTS
Republic Records

See story, page 102.

02

Julie Greenwald
CHAIRMAN/CEO
Atlantic Music Group

Craig Kallman
CHAIRMAN/CEO
Atlantic Records

See story, page 104.

03

John Janick
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Steve Berman
VICE CHAIRMAN
Interscope Geffen A&M

See story, page 106.

04

Ron Perry
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Jenifer Mallory
EXECUTIVE VP/GM
Columbia Records

See story, page 116.

05

Peter Edge
CHAIRMAN/CEO

John Fleckenstein
COO

Mark Pitts
PRESIDENT
RCA Records

“Thoughtful, patient, A&R-focused leadership and dedicated artist development has led to a true renaissance for the label,” says Edge, who with Fleckenstein and Pitts led RCA to several triumphs in 2022, including *Billboard* cover star Steve Lacy’s record of the year contender, “Bad Habit,” which spent three weeks atop the Billboard Hot 100. Fellow RCA signee SZA returned with her highly anticipated second album, *SOS*, which has so far spent its first six weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, matching a record for an R&B album by a female artist set by Janet Jackson’s *janet* in 1993. Other notable wins included Latto, who finished 2022 as *Billboard*’s top new artist of the year thanks to her hit single “Big Energy.”

06

Michelle Jubelirer
CHAIR/CEO

Arjun Pulijal
PRESIDENT
Capitol Music Group

Capitol’s team scored Sam Smith and Kim Petras their first Hot 100 No. 1 single with “Unholy,” which also garnered a Grammy nomination for best pop duo/group performance. Jubelirer says the track’s success is “just the start of what is going to be an amazing period in Sam’s career.” CMG also signed rapper Kodak Black (who topped the Billboard Artist 100 for the first time last year after his Atlantic Records contract ended) and worked with rising stars Doechii and Ice Spice, while its Capitol Christian Music Group scored 21 Grammy nominations.

07

Aaron Bay-Schuck
CHAIRMAN/CEO
Tom Corson
CHAIRMAN/COO
Warner Records

Since they took over Warner five years ago, Corson and Bay-Schuck have scored six best new artist Grammy nominations, including 2023 nominees Anitta, Omar Apollo and Molly Tuttle. “That is a real testament not only to the high quality of artists we have signed, but a true recognition of the artist development-minded focus we have,” Bay-Schuck says. The label’s surprise success story, though, is Zach Bryan, who signed with Warner through his own Belting Bronco label and landed his single “Something in the Orange” at No. 2 on both the Hot Country Songs and Hot Rock & Alternative Songs charts. The track had generated more than 432 million overall U.S. streams at the end of 2022. And Bryan’s album *American Heartbreak* was No. 8 on *Billboard*’s year-end Top Country Albums chart, in the company of Morgan Wallen, Chris Stapleton and Luke Combs. Bryan’s “immense fan base in such a relatively short time,” Corson says, “is beyond impressive.”

THE TOP 30

02

Rob Stringer

CHAIRMAN

SONY MUSIC GROUP

In Stringer's sixth year as Sony Music's chief executive, the label group's current market share rose from 24.19% in 2021 to 26.99% in 2022, closing the gap between it and industry leader Universal Music Group by half compared with 2021. The gains were due in large part to massive releases by Adele, Harry Styles, Rimas Entertainment artist Bad Bunny and Beyoncé, all four of whom are up for album of the year at the Grammy Awards on Feb. 5. Despite that, Stringer says he's not satisfied. "I would like to have Rosalía in there as well, and Steve Lacy should be in the album of the year [category], too," he says. "I'm never happy."

When you look back on 2022, what do you see as emblematic of the year Sony had?
It was the spread of success — artists from a lot of countries and from a lot of my companies. And that's always pleasing. But we can get better.

Has the success of Bad Bunny influenced your vision for what popular music can be in 2023?
I don't take for granted any potential A&R source from around the world now. It is a global business more than ever. And I'm traveling more than ever. I just went to Mexico City. I'm about to go to Australia, Singapore, India and Dubai because the Middle East is opening up for music as well. North America and the U.K. are mainstays of popular music and always will be, but the records are coming from everywhere.

Do you agree with recent complaints about the industry that artist development doesn't get the attention it needs?
There's a mythology that labels are just about slapdash, one-off hits on TikTok. That's nonsense. Artist development is absolutely at the heart of every single A&R affiliate we have. The best thing to happen is when records kick in with artists with lots of content [already] out there, so then people discover it. Steve Lacy is a perfect example.

What's on the horizon for the music industry in 2023?
The socioeconomic climate is going to change some things. And I'd like to understand what it means for the sheer influx of money coming into the business — whether that stays in, if the economic headwinds go the other way. —ANDREW UNTERBERGER

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 69.

Stringer photographed by Matt Salacuse on Jan. 13 at the Ned in New York.

GROOMING BY LAURA COSTA USING DEDE AND KEVIN MURPHY AT EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS

08

Sylvia Rhone
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Ezekiel Lewis
EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF A&R
Epic Records

Lewis says the phenomenal success of rapper Future, who notched his eighth No. 1 and 15th top 10 Billboard 200 album in 2022 with *I Never Liked You*, "speaks to the long-term potential that exists when the vision of a musical genius is supported." Rhone also cites the success of DJ Khaled's *GOD DID* album, which topped 502.7 million U.S. streams; Meghan Trainor's TikTok favorite, "Made You Look," which generated 151 million overall worldwide streams in 2022; and Ozzy Osbourne's Grammy-nominated *Patient Number 9*, which hit No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Top Album Sales chart.

09

Kevin Liles
CHAIRMAN/CEO
300 Elektra Entertainment

In June, Warner Music Group announced that Liles, a Warner Music veteran and co-founder of 300 would run 300 Elektra Entertainment, a new entertainment group that encompasses 300, Elektra, Fueled by Ramen and YSL Records, along with four other labels, distributor Sparta and a new film/content division, 300 Studios. It was a vote of confidence for an executive who had kept 300 and its imprints racking up wins while dealing with the May arrests on racketeering charges of two of his biggest stars — Gunna and YSL founder Young Thug. Gunna, who had topped the Billboard 200 in early 2022 with *DS4ever* and subsequently earned two Grammy nominations, was released from jail in December after cutting a plea deal, but Young Thug, whose birth name is Jeffery Williams, remains behind bars and faces a stiff sentence if convicted of leading a criminal street gang that essentially doubled as a rap collective. In a statement to *The New York Times*, Liles said that YSL Records "is and always has been exclusively a recorded-music partnership with Jeffery Williams. Nothing I've seen has changed my point of view." Liles also started the petition "Art on Trial: Protect Black Art" on Change.org, which urges the adoption of legislation that would limit prosecutors' ability to "use rap lyrics as confessions," he writes in the petition, noting that allegations in the YSL case "heavily rely on the artists' lyrics". The petition has collected over 81,000 signatures. As the YSL drama unfolded, 3EE worked Megan Thee Stallion's second album, *Trau-*

THE TOP 30
03

Michael Rapino

PRESIDENT/CEO
LIVE NATION

Rapino enters the new year having exceeded the high bar he set for himself in the pivotal post-pandemic period, but still facing the reputational headwinds he has dealt with since Live Nation's 2010 merger with Ticketmaster.

When 2022 earnings post in February, Live Nation is expected to report record revenue and profits thanks to a busy third quarter (historically the company's best), with revenue up 63% compared with 2021, generating $6.2 billion in gross revenue with operating income of $506 million for the quarter and nearly $1 billion in adjusted free cash flow. The robust rebound of the concert business, which Rapino had forecast since the beginning of the pandemic and stuck by in the face of concerns over inflation and COVID-19 wariness, was made even sweeter thanks to gains made against the secondary ticketing market. Industry experts believe that Live Nation has been able to shift as much as 20% of the revenue generated on the secondary market for concert ticket sales thanks to programs like Verified Fan and platinum tickets, recapturing revenue Rapino says he has long wanted to see go to artists.

Despite Live Nation's strong fiscal success, its ticketing business, along with its festival division, represent peril for the company. The investigation into the Astroworld tragedy remains ongoing one year after 10 concertgoers died at Travis Scott's Houston festival, as do lawsuits with potential billion-dollar-plus payouts that company officials have quietly said in recent months would mostly be covered by insurance.

The company's safety history and — as the Senate Judiciary Committee's Jan. 24 grilling of Live Nation president/CFO Joe Berchtold demonstrated — ownership of Ticketmaster are both facing scrutiny in Congress as lawmakers openly discuss ways to counter what many see as anti-competitive practices. Rapino will undoubtedly survive the probe into the problems with the headline-making Taylor Swift ticket sales crash — the incident doesn't violate the narrowly written consent decree governing Live Nation's merger with Ticketmaster, but the constant calls for breaking up the company have been popular with both political parties and are gaining momentum. —DAVE BROOKS

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 104.

CORAL VON ZUMWALT

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

> **“When you can tell a great story and use music creatively, you see the results.”**
>
> —KEN BUNT, DISNEY MUSIC GROUP

mazine, to an August No. 5 debut on the Billboard 200, while veteran acts Mary J. Blige and Brandi Carlile notched multiple Grammy nominations. “The recognition we received was not only a testament to the culture-moving artistry we have across our diverse roster,” says Liles, “but our team’s ability to deliver across multiple genres.”

10

Randy Goodman
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Ken Robold
EXECUTIVE VP/COO
Sony Music Nashville

It was a good year for Sony Music Nashville’s marquee artists Kane Brown and Luke Combs. Brown became the first act to play all 29 NBA arenas on a single tour, and Combs scored his third consecutive Top Country Albums No. 1 with *Growin’ Up*. And Goodman says he has more rising stars on deck. “Nate Smith, Corey Kent and new signing with our Columbia partner Megan Moroney are making significant headway and dominating the streaming charts with their successful singles,” he says. “I’m always energized to see our newcomers joining the charts with the more established acts.”

11

Todd Moscowitz
CEO
Alamo Records

Since Sony Music acquired a majority stake in Moscowitz’s Alamo Records in 2021, the label has continued to release chart-topping albums: Lil Durk’s *7220* and Rod Wave’s *Beautiful Mind* both debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. What’s more, Lil Durk finished 2022 at No. 19 on the year-end Top Artists chart — his second year in a row inside the top 20. At a time when acts are looking for increasingly flexible arrangements with partners, Alamo is also expanding its reach with the launch of a new artist and label services company, Santa Anna, which serves as an incubator for entrepreneurs and small labels, especially in hip-hop, by providing distribution, marketing and promotional support.

12

Ken Bunt
PRESIDENT
Disney Music Group

“When you can tell a great story and use music creatively,” Bunt says, “you see the results.” One word proved his point last year: *Encanto*. The animated film’s songs by Lin-Manuel Miranda all cracked the Hot 100, with “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” leading the way to become the biggest Disney song of all time and Miranda ending 2022 as the top Hot 100 songwriter. But Disney’s success with music for the big screen went well beyond that, with soundtracks for Marvel Studios’ *Black Panther 2: Wakanda Forever* (over 195 million U.S. on-demand streams), 20th Century Studio’s *Avatar: The Way of Water* (upwards of 16.5 million U.S. on-demand streams) and the Netflix hit *Purple Hearts* (a vehicle for Hollywood Records star Sofia Carson). Meanwhile, the Disney catalog — which includes not only its many film franchises but also the music of Queen — continued to flourish, with the Disney Hits playlist reaching over 20 million monthly listeners on Spotify.

13

Ethiopia Habtemariam
FORMER CHAIRWOMAN/CEO
Motown Records

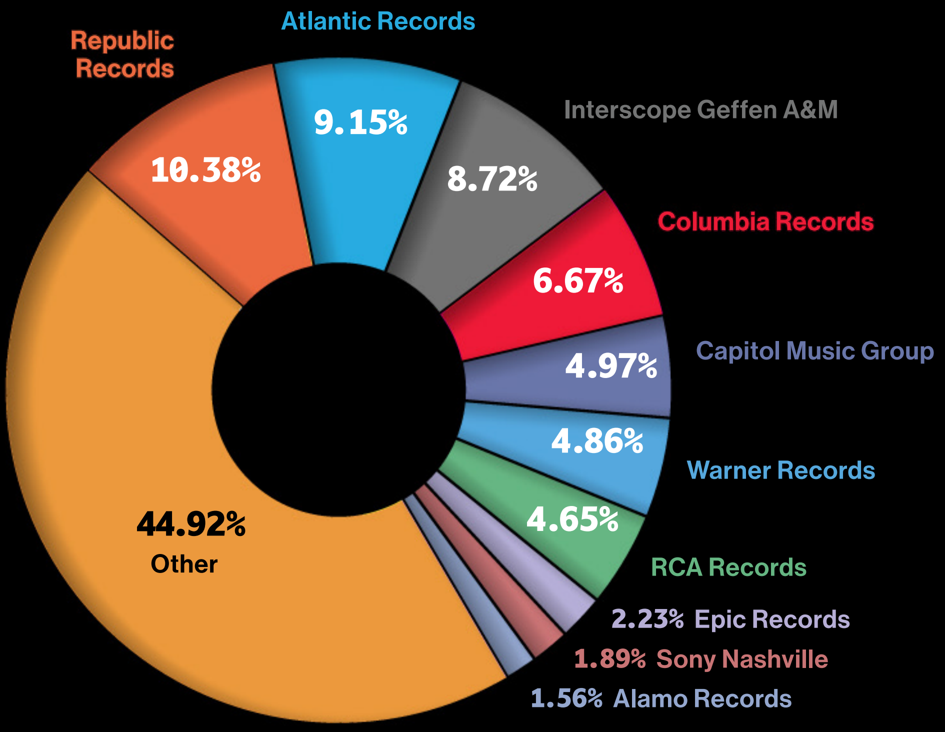
Pierre “P” Thomas
FOUNDER/CEO

Kevin “Coach K” Lee
FOUNDER/COO
Quality Control Music

Prior to exiting as chairwoman/CEO in late 2022 after nearly two years at the label’s helm and almost seven years as president, Habtemariam capped her tenure by signing Brandy, Diddy and YoungBoy Never Broke Again, whose hotly anticipated mixtape, *I Rest My Case*, bowed at No. 9 on the Billboard 200 in January. (At press time, her successor had not been appointed.) And though speculation persists that Quality Control bosses Thomas and Lee are seeking a new label joint venture, their partnership with Motown continued to produce hits. Quality Control artist Lil Baby’s fall 2022 album, *It’s Only Me*, debuted at No. 1, and the RIAA certified his 2018 hit “Drip Too Hard” (with Gunna) diamond. Motown scored a string of other album successes from Vince Staples, Smino and fellow Quality Control rappers Quavo and the late Takeoff. Offset and City Girls also released hit singles.

Year-End Market Share By Label

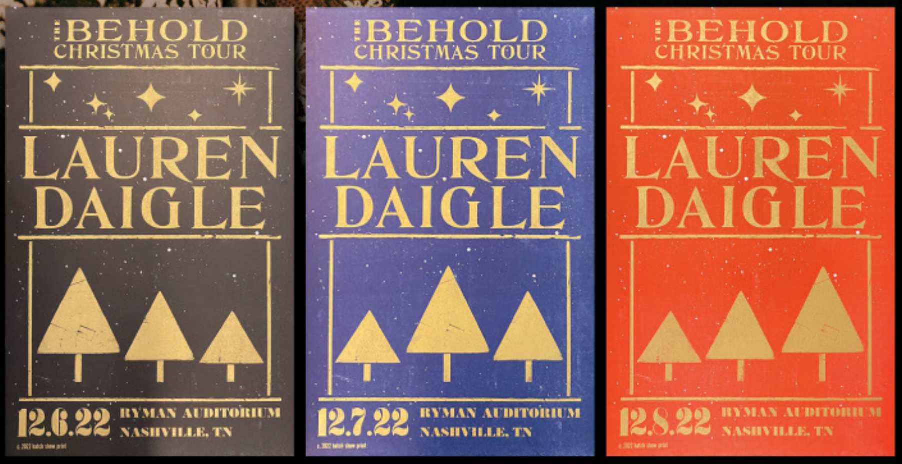
Republic Records rode a strong fourth quarter to finish the year at No. 1 among the top 10 major labels of 2022, with a current market share of 10.38% thanks to the massive success of Taylor Swift’s *Midnights*, Drake’s *Certified Lover Boy* and the continued success of albums by Morgan Wallen and The Weeknd. Atlantic maintained its position at No. 2, with Gunna, Lizzo and Jack Harlow leading the way, while Interscope Geffen A&M came in at No. 3 by way of albums by Kendrick Lamar, Machine Gun Kelly and Blackpink.



CONGRATULATIONS
LAUREN DAIGLE
ON THREE SOLD-OUT SHOWS!

SPECIAL THANKS TO

ADAM WEISER & THE AEG TEAM AND LEIGH HOLT, DAN WISE, NICK WEIR & THE MADDJETT TEAM!


THE BEHOLD CHRISTMAS TOUR
LAUREN DAIGLE
12.6.22 RYMAN AUDITORIUM NASHVILLE, TN
THE BEHOLD CHRISTMAS TOUR
LAUREN DAIGLE
12.7.22 RYMAN AUDITORIUM NASHVILLE, TN
THE BEHOLD CHRISTMAS TOUR
LAUREN DAIGLE
12.8.22 RYMAN AUDITORIUM NASHVILLE, TN

RYMAN

RYMAN SPONSORS

PNC BANK axs Ford

Photo by Ashley Wright

Kyncl photographed by Jai Lennard on Jan. 10 in New York.

GROOMING BY LAURA COSTA USING DEDE AND KEVIN MURPHY AT EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS

THE TOP 30

04

Robert Kyncl

CEO

WARNER MUSIC GROUP

After a decade as chief business officer at YouTube, Kyncl on Jan. 1 took over as the new CEO of Warner Music Group, replacing longtime chief Stephen Cooper. The Czechoslovakia-born Kyncl, who was Netflix's vp of content acquisitions prior to joining YouTube, is expected to bring a focus on technology to the major. This is his first interview since taking the job.

What made you want to move from YouTube to WMG?
I could have gone in many different directions from YouTube. But I saw there how music moves audiences, how it transcends technologies and how it drives culture. In an increasingly digital world, we, the music industry, make people happy, sad, excited — we make them feel. That's very powerful. WMG is the perfect size. We're big enough to create change, but also small enough to have plenty of room for growth.

What have you learned from your time at YouTube that you think will translate particularly well into running WMG?
How to help artists, songwriters and labels use technology to build and expand their audience and their brand. Despite having lots to learn about the A&R process, being a champion of artists and songwriters comes naturally to me.

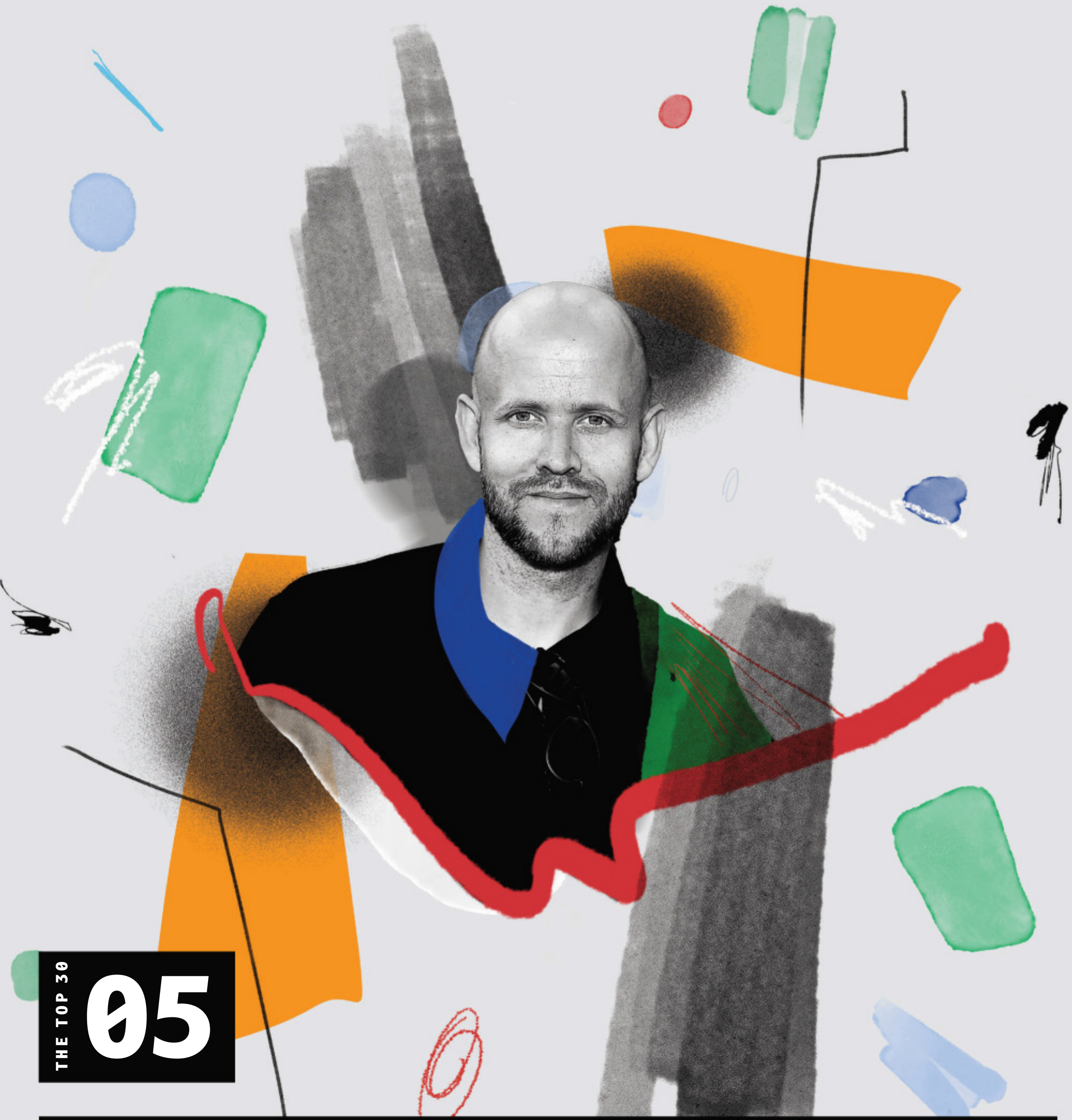
What are the biggest opportunities you see for the record business in general?
The world is becoming more domestic and more global at the same time. It's fascinating. Unlike in politics, where this can be divisive, in music, different sounds and styles of storytelling are ricocheting off one another, and that's bringing the world together. The boundaries of genre and geography have been swept away. We are a unifying force. Against that backdrop, music is the killer format for almost every type of consumer entertainment — video, film, gaming, fitness, etc. There are more and more ways for superfans to engage with music and their favorite artists, but it is yet an uncovered opportunity for all of us.

Coming from the digital service provider side, what do you think are the biggest mistakes labels are making? How can they better utilize what the DSPs offer?
One mistake I believe has been the pushback against adding [user-generated content] to *Billboard* and other charts. In my mind, UGC, whether super short like YouTube Shorts, TikTok or Reels, or longer, is the highest form of fandom and engagement. That a fan would care enough to take a song and create something new with it should be celebrated, not ignored. Without capturing the traction generated by fan-created content, the charts are only a reflection of passive consumption. And that's an obvious miss, in my opinion.

What have you learned in negotiating from the DSP side that you can bring to the label side in terms of licensing agreements?
In the last few years, we've adopted "License when you need it" versus "Do it all at once," Super Bowl-type of negotiations. And I think that has worked out pretty well. But you can only do that if you build well-aligned, trusted relationships with your partners. I'm proud of what YouTube has done on that front in the last five years or so. Life and careers are long — it's better to build together.

What are you looking forward to most in this new role?
Probably the music-creation side of the business and the creative process. When I was growing up, I played cello and Spanish guitar. I love music. At YouTube, of course, I had a front-row seat to watch artists like Dua Lipa go from blue flame to catching fire all over the world. I look forward to learning from people who really understand talent and help them unleash their potential. And do it over and over again. —D.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 69.



THE TOP 30

05

Daniel Ek

CEO

SPOTIFY

Last year's gloomy economic outlook didn't hurt Spotify's subscription business: Ek's company added 15 million subscribers in the first three quarters of 2022, beating its own predictions. The streamer now has 456 million monthly active users spread across 183 countries, and it paid out over $7 billion in royalties to rights holders in 2021, up $2 billion from the year before. And this wealth is being distributed to a wider pool of acts from around the world. For the first time in the platform's history, over 1,000 artists generated $1 million-plus on Spotify in 2021, and 34% of the acts that generated over $10,000 on the platform reside in countries outside IFPI's top 10 music markets.

But Spotify was unable to escape the layoff wave that has hit the tech industry. The streaming platform announced it will reduce its global workforce by 6% due to the "challenging economic environment," and Dawn Ostroff, who helped lead the company's push into podcasts, will be exiting.

Despite that, it now offers over 4 million podcasts, which Ek told investors "has brought more listeners to Spotify and deepened engagement." After vaulting over competitors to become "the No. 1 platform that podcast listeners use the most in numerous markets around the world," Spotify set its sights on audiobooks, putting 300,000 of them up for sale in the United States, the United Kingdom and other select markets. "We believe that audiobooks, in their many different forms, will be a massive opportunity," Ek said. Just how massive? He pegged the format at "$70 billion for us to expand and eventually compete for." He added, "And just as we've done in podcasting, expect us to play to win." —ELIAS LEIGHT

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 98.

14

Tunji Balogun

CHAIRMAN/CEO

LaTrice Burnette

EXECUTIVE VP

Def Jam Recordings

PRESIDENT

4th & Broadway

Rihanna's long-awaited return to music — the *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* track "Lift Me Up" — resulted in her highest Hot 100 debut and best-starting radio single to date when it was released in November. Balogun says the "diversity of artists, sounds and styles" on the full soundtrack album, released on Def Jam/Roc Nation/Hollywood Records, "is perfectly aligned and representative of where we're headed as a label." Other successes in 2022 included Pusha T's first No. 1 debut on the Billboard 200 with the Grammy-nominated *It's Almost Dry*; Muni Long's three Grammy nods, including best new artist; and the breakthrough of Armani White, who scored a viral hit with his "Billie Eilish" single.

15

Afo Verde

CHAIRMAN/CEO, LATIN-IBERIA

Alex Gallardo

PRESIDENT OF U.S. LATIN

Sony Music Entertainment

After nine wins at the 2022 Billboard Latin Music Awards, including Latin airplay label of the year, Verde and Gallardo continued their winning streak, finishing No. 2 on *Billboard*'s year-end Top Latin Labels chart thanks to major releases by marquee artists. Romeo Santos delivered *Formula, Vol. 3*, which earned him his sixth straight No. 1 on the Tropical Albums chart. Camilo scored his third straight top 10 on Latin Pop Albums with *De Adentro Pa Afuera*. Shakira hit 17 No. 1s on Latin Airplay, and her newest single, "Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53," with fellow Sony artist Bizarrap debuted at No. 9 on the Hot 100.

16

Mike Dungan

CHAIRMAN/CEO

Cindy Mabe

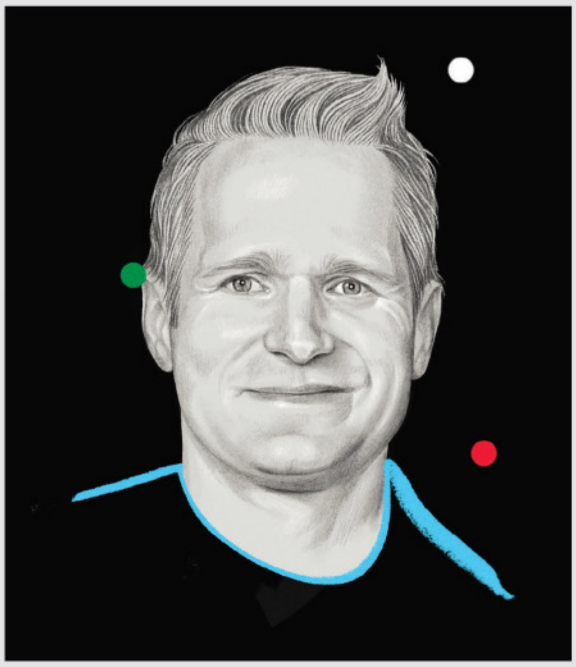
PRESIDENT

Universal Music Group Nashville

As Dungan prepares to retire at the end of March after more than a decade at the helm and Mabe plans to ascend to chair/CEO on April 1, UMGN ended 2022 at No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Top Country

DAVE J. HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR



THE TOP 30

06

Oliver Schusser

VP OF APPLE MUSIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONTENT

APPLE MUSIC

Apple revolutionized the music industry when it launched its iTunes store in 2003. It eventually lost its leadership role to the game-changing Spotify, but it's back to battling with Daniel Ek's streaming service for music distribution supremacy. Apple has displaced Spotify as the No. 1 digital platform in the United States in terms of revenue and the royalty fees it pays labels and publishers, according to industry sources. And *Billboard* estimates that in 2021, Apple Music's U.S. streaming and download services topped $3.5 billion in revenue. The platform's emergence as the new sponsor of the Super Bowl Halftime Show should boost its profile when Apple Music livestreams Rihanna's performance at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz., on Feb. 12.

Apple trails Spotify internationally (and Tencent in Asia), but executives consider it the front-runner in hip-hop, R&B and 10- to 15-year-old catalog titles.

In June 2021, Apple Music launched spatial audio and lossless high-fidelity versions of songs, which distinguishes it from Spotify, and initially didn't charge consumers extra for the improved sound quality. When Apple did decide to raise its subscription price last fall, it lifted music stock prices and prompted Amazon to follow suit in January, paving the way for Spotify to make the same move.

Since its launch, the number of listeners opting for this enhanced sound has tripled and currently represents 80% of its subscribers worldwide, according to Apple. That stat could improve as well, now that Mercedes-Benz has equipped a limited-edition model with spatial audio and is expected to incorporate the technology more widely.

The company also rolled out a redesigned Apple Music Replay that, like Spotify Wrapped, allows subscribers to review their top plays for the year and whether they are among the top 100 listeners of an artist or genre. And Apple Music Live gives fans access to exclusive performances by artists such as Harry Styles, Billie Eilish, Lil Durk and Mary J. Blige.

Apple was happy enough with Schusser, who has led its music operations since 2018, to give him additional responsibilities. In January, the tech giant announced that he would take over the business side of Apple TV+. Now that the company's audio and video streaming businesses are both under his leadership, Apple's already strong ability to feed consumers from one business segment to another through its hardware and streaming services is expected to improve, fueling its revenue.

—ED CHRISTMAN

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 98.

SCHUSSER ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: APPLE MUSIC

> "We've challenged ourselves and our staff to develop closer personal relationships with our artists to better understand their viewpoints and to be a source of ideas and inspiration. Sometimes the best compliment is when our artists post about each other and the label in support of this family-oriented environment."
>
> —JUSTIN ESHAK, ISLAND RECORDS

Labels year-end chart. Plus its Capitol imprint ruled the year-end Country Airplay Labels chart. During awards season Chris Stapleton won his sixth Country Music Association male vocalist of the year award in November, the most of any artist in the category, and Jordan Davis took home his first CMA Award for song of the year with "Buy Dirt." Carrie Underwood, Luke Bryan and Keith Urban also opened or continued sold-out Las Vegas residencies.

17

Jesús López

CHAIRMAN/CEO

Universal Music Latin America & Iberian Peninsula

Angel Kaminsky

PRESIDENT

Universal Music Latino

Universal Music Latino scored major wins this past year with reggaetón artist Feid, who earned his first top 10-charting set on Top Latin Albums in October and sold out all 14 dates of his first-ever U.S. tour within 24 hours. Sebastián Yatra performed "Dos Oruguitas" from the *Encanto* soundtrack at the 2022 Academy Awards ceremony. And Karol G ranked No. 2 on *Billboard*'s year-end Top Latin Artists chart and mounted the highest-grossing U.S. tour by a female Latin act. Her $Trip Love run grossed $69.9 million and sold 410,000 tickets across 33 shows in North America.

"The foundation of our work philosophy is the discovery, development and, above all, the crossover of our Latin artists," López says, "and that can be seen in their extraordinary achievements during 2022."

18

Scott Borchetta

CHAIRMAN/CEO/PRESIDENT

Big Machine Label Group

Thomas Rhett landed his 18th No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Country Airplay chart, while Carly Pearce (along with Ashley McBryde) topped the chart with the powerful ballad "Never Wanted To Be That Girl." But some of BMLG's biggest success came from outside the country genre through its new partnership with Blac Noize! Recordings: "F.N.F." by Hitkidd & GloRilla reached No. 1 on the Mainstream R&B/Hip-Hop chart. "In 2023," Borchetta pledges, "there will be quite a bit more hip-hop and rock releases, along with a very stout country release schedule."

19

Justin Eshak
Imran Majid

CO-CEOs

Island Records

In their first year as Island Records co-CEOs, Eshak and Majid focused on creating "an environment where artists want to be and where people want to work," says Majid. Apparently, they were

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

successful. Island, along with Republic Records, won the competition to sign singer-songwriter and *American Idol* alum Lauren Spencer Smith, who went on to release the platinum singles “Fingers Crossed” and “Flowers” in 2022, as well as “Single on the 25th,” a holiday track that seems destined to be a perennial. Soon after, SleazyWorld Go joined the label, and his first single, “Sleazy Flow,” debuted at No. 47 on the Hot 100. On the structural side, Majid and Eshak took on new roles within the company and promoted existing employees including GM Mike Alexander. “We’ve challenged ourselves and our staff to develop closer personal relationships with our artists to better understand their viewpoints and to be a source of ideas and inspiration,” says Eshak. “Sometimes the best compliment is when our artists post about each other and the label in support of this family-oriented environment.”

20

Richard Story

PRESIDENT, COMMERCIAL MUSIC GROUP

Sony Music Entertainment

Over the past year, SME and its catalog division have had “unprecedented opportunities” to enhance and market their recordings, Story says, which is an understatement, given the artists he references. In 2022, SME acquired Bob Dylan’s catalog, which *Billboard* valued at $200 million; Story’s team helped remarket Elvis Presley’s catalog for Baz Luhrmann’s *Elvis* film; Legacy put out *Prince and the Revolution: Live*; and Legacy and RCA released a fifth-anniversary edition of SZA’s *Ctrl*. “It’s a privilege to play a part in making great art available to everyone,” Story says, adding that both catalog and contemporary albums are “enjoying new viability, exposure and popularity via streaming.”

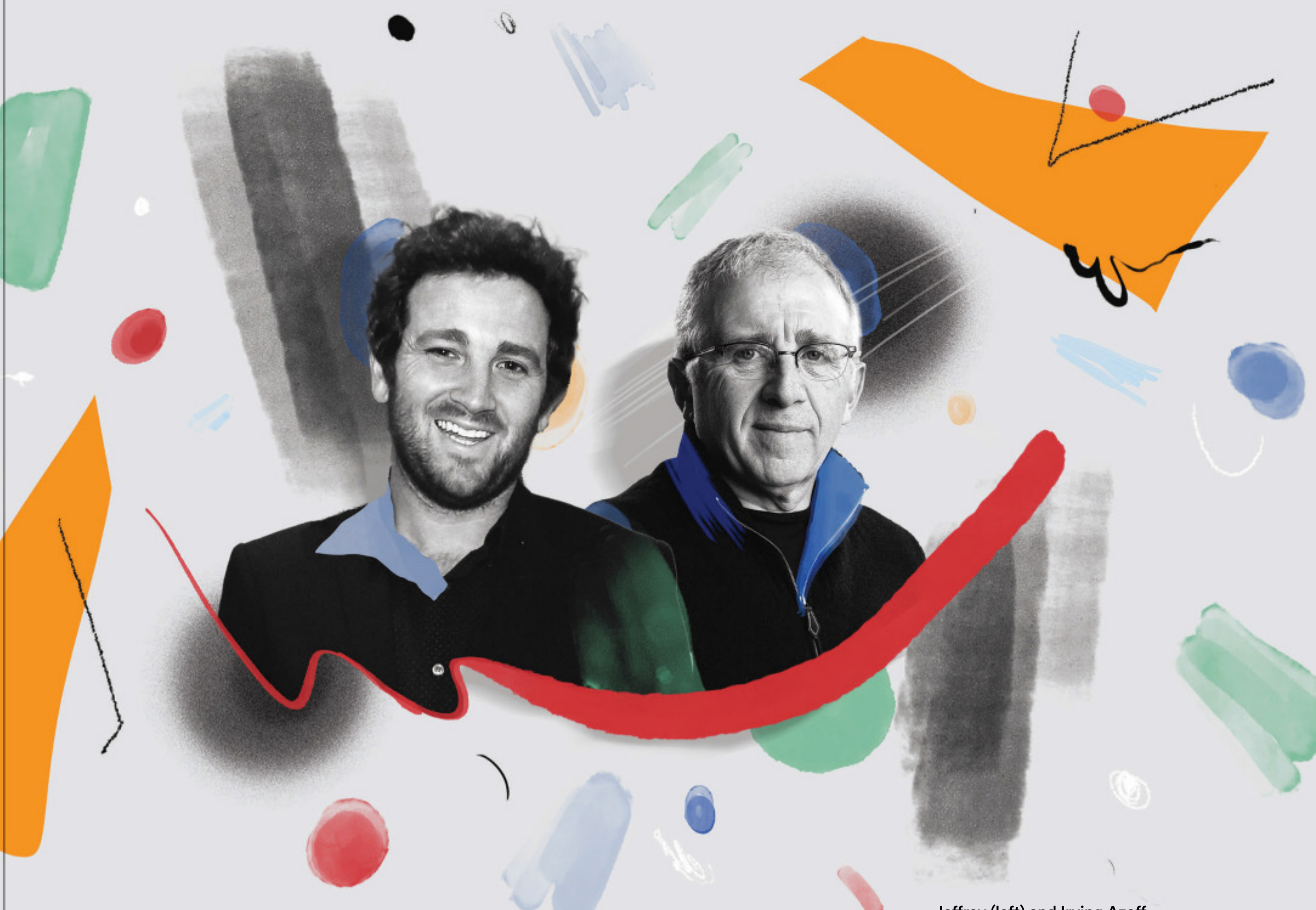
21

Bruce Resnikoff

PRESIDENT/CEO

Universal Music Enterprises

UMe got some nice shine from the Recording Academy when its 50th-anniversary box set for George Harrison’s *All Things Must Pass* — an “uber-deluxe” version that retailed for $999.98 sold out — won a Grammy. Resnikoff can now look forward to curating and releasing parent company Universal Music Group’s acquisitions of Neil Diamond’s complete recorded catalog, which includes 110 unreleased songs; Frank Zappa’s entire archive, which Resnikoff calls a “treasure trove;” and 200 songs by Nat “King” Cole (which now puts Cole’s entire catalog in UMG’s hands).



Jeffrey (left) and Irving Azoff

Irving Azoff

CHAIRMAN/CEO

THE AZOFF COMPANY

Jeffrey Azoff

COO

THE AZOFF COMPANY

CEO

FULL STOP MANAGEMENT

THE TOP 30

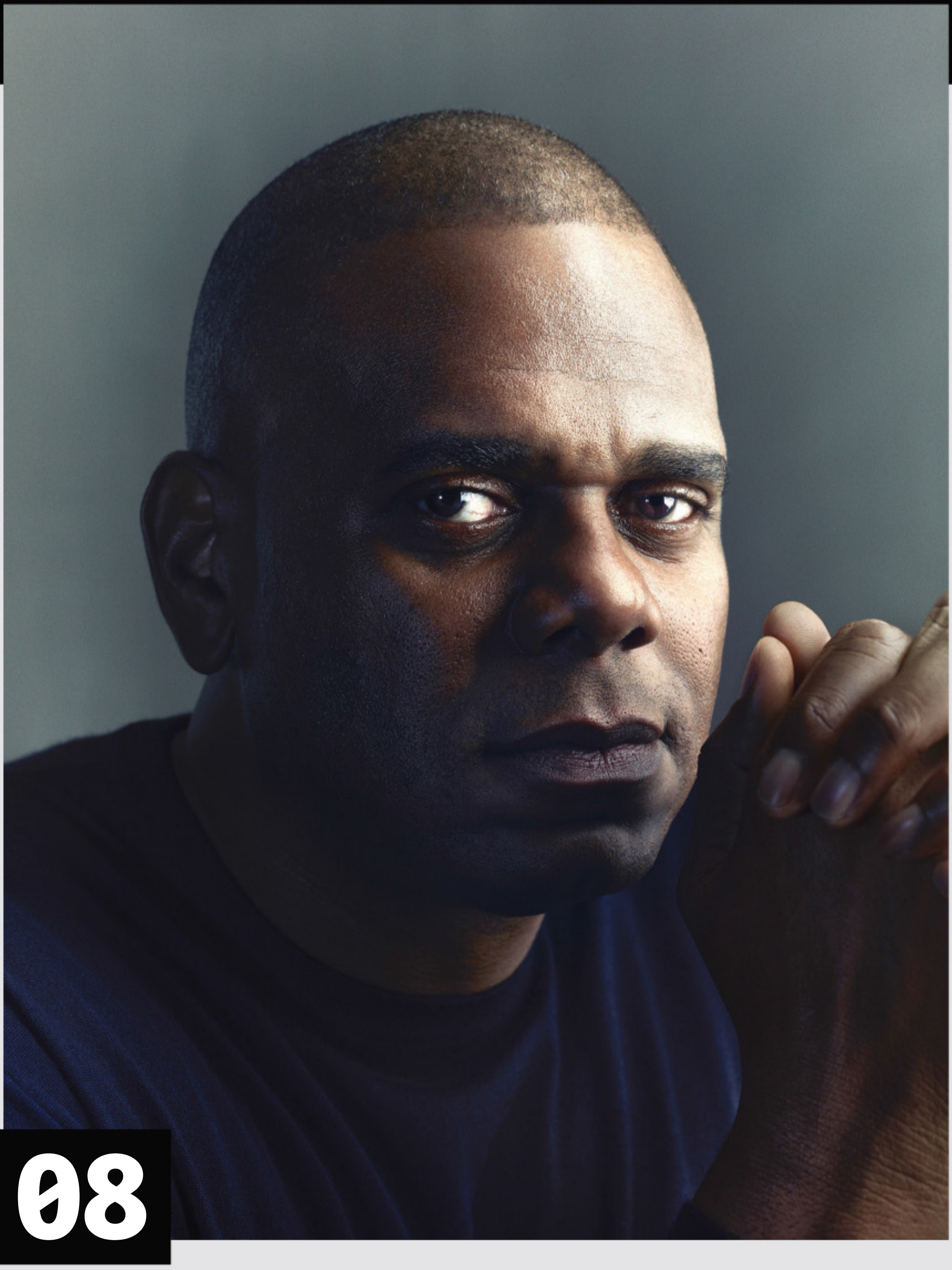
07

In an era of music business expansion, Azoff and company remain at the forefront. For starters, it was a good year to be in the Harry Styles business, as the Full Stop Management client finished 2022 with the fourth-biggest album and the most audio streamed song released that year, *Harry’s House* and “As It Was,” respectively. The latter also ended 2022 as the most-heard song on U.S. radio and the No. 1 song on *Billboard*’s year-end global chart. Styles also grossed north of $214 million on the road — a tour that included a historic 15-night residency at New York’s Madison Square Garden. But The Azoff Company is hardly wedded to one act — or even a single business sector. Full Stop alone manages 40-plus clients, including Lizzo, the Eagles, John Mayer and Jon Bon Jovi, and added Cardi B and U2 to the fold. Catalog brand-management company Iconic Artists Group inked deals for the catalog of Stephen Stills to pair it with the 2021 acquisition of David Crosby’s, as well as the rights to assets by Nat “King” Cole and Dean Martin. Performing rights organization Global Music Rights — which represents acts such as Bruce Springsteen, Drake, Pearl Jam, Bad Bunny and Bruno Mars — has continued to exercise its clout, settling a five-year antitrust lawsuit against the Radio Music Licensing Committee in February and filing lawsuits in October against three broadcasting companies over alleged nonpayment of royalties. And the Azoffs returned to the label business by officially launching Giant Records in June with Columbia veteran Shawn Holiday at the helm, signing artists like Tay B, SwaVay, Ayleen and Cash Cobain. Through The Azoff Company, Irving is also a co-founder and co-owner of venue developer Oak View Group, which announced plans for a $3 billion entertainment district and state-of-the-art arena in Las Vegas, set to begin work this year. —D.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 84.

JEFFREY: WILLY SANJUAN/PICTURE GROUP; IRVING: THE AZOFF COMPANY.

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR



NADAV KANDER

THE TOP 30

08

Jon Platt

CHAIRMAN/CEO

SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

At the close of the third quarter of 2022, Sony Music Publishing had finished first on *Billboard*'s Publishers Quarterly: Top Radio Airplay ranking for six consecutive quarters, and while radio dominance was a crucial win, Platt also focused on better supporting its songwriting roster. In the past year, he led the company to enhance its Legacy Unrecouped Balance Program, which erases writers' unrecouped advances and enables them to earn royalties moving forward. Sony Music Publishing also launched Songwriter Assistance, which provides free counseling services and other resources in over 70 languages. Both initiatives "have been extremely well received," Platt says. Most 2022 wins for the publishing giant were the result of years of building, such as its expansion in Africa, including opening an office in Nigeria, and the continued growth of its Nashville branch, which the BMI Country Awards named publisher of the year for the second consecutive year. And thanks to a savvy synch placement in the fourth season of Netflix's *Stranger Things*, Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)" had a massive, viral resurgence, introducing the British songwriter-artist to a new generation. At its peak, the track reached No. 1 on the Billboard Global 200 and Streaming charts. The publisher also continued to add hot contemporary songwriters to its roster, finalizing deals with Ashley Gorley, Tainy, Anitta, Ryan Tedder, Danger Mouse, Måneskin and Promised Land. —KRISTIN ROBINSON

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 92.

UMe also put out releases by Megadeth and Def Leppard — both of which debuted near the top of the Billboard 200. Resnikoff says it all added up to a seventh straight year of "record-high catalog market share" in the United States.

22

Ben Kline
Cris Lacy

CO-CHAIRS/CO-PRESIDENTS

Warner Music Nashville

Prior to taking the reins from emeritus John Esposito in January, Kline and Lacy helped engineer a 2022 breakthrough for singer-songwriter Bailey Zimmerman when he became the first artist to place three career-opening tracks in the top 10 of the Hot Country Songs chart simultaneously: "Rock and a Hard Place," "Where It Ends" and "Fall in Love." "From less than 1 million streams a week when the year began to nearly 40 million a week globally across 13 tracks is truly remarkable in this climate," says Kline. Additional wins for the label included Kenny Chesney earning the No. 1 *Billboard* country tour for 2022, Cody Johnson notching a two-week Country Airplay chart-topper with the Country Music Association Award-winning " 'Til You Can't" and Cole Swindell spending four weeks atop the Country Airplay chart with "She Had Me at Heads Carolina." And Ashley McBryde's *Lindeville* earned her a third Grammy nomination for best country album.

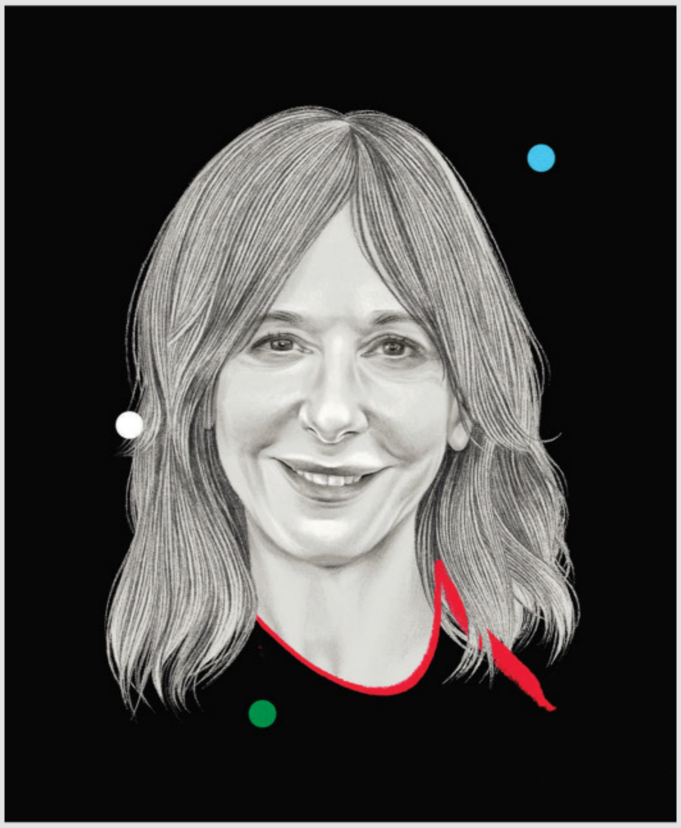
23

Alejandro Duque

PRESIDENT

Warner Music Latin America

After being appointed its new president in summer 2021, Duque has committed to redesigning the structure of Warner Music Latin America by "bringing new leadership to the team" and "implementing global strategies across all territories to maximize overall reach for our artists and projects," he says. Notably, the launch of the label's Música Mexicana division, spearheaded by Delia Orjuela, has signed newcomers such as DannyLux and genre legends such as Pesado. Duque assures the label "has achieved boundless amounts of success" in the past year, including Anitta's "Envolver" earning a Guinness World Record for becoming the first Brazilian artist to reach No. 1 on Spotify's Global chart, joining forces with Meta to create the first-ever music video fully shot in virtual reality in Meta's Horizon Worlds for Blessd's single "Quien TV" and signing "new promising and rising stars" such as Tiago PZK, Elena Rose and Ovy on the Drums.



THE TOP 30 **09**

Jody Gerson

CHAIRMAN/CEO

UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

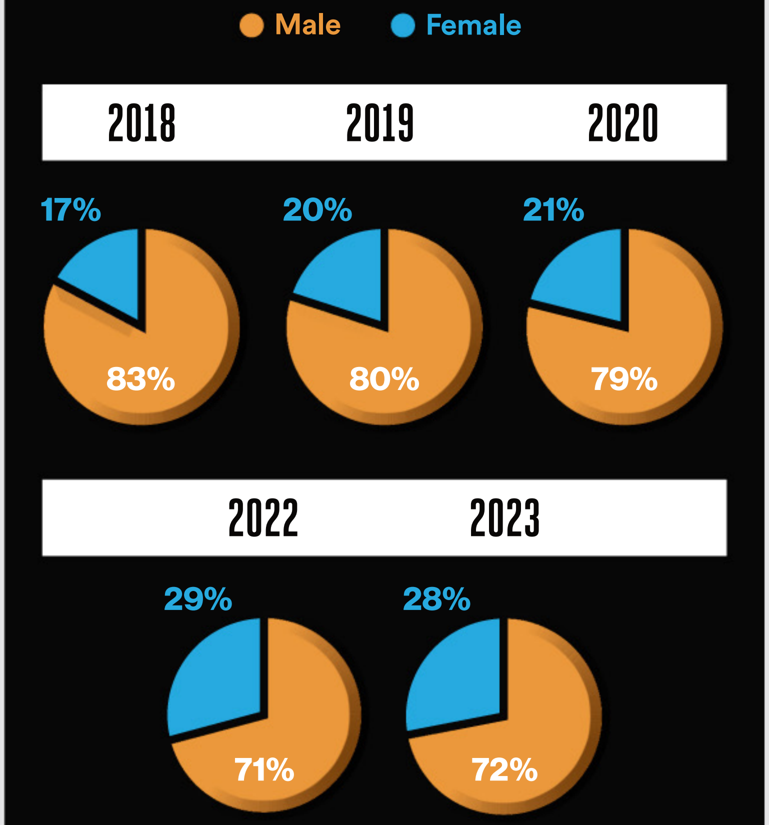
Looking back on 2022, Gerson says she's proud to have led UMPG to its "most successful year ever," as well as one of major transformation. As Universal Music Group's publishing division adjusted to its first year as part of a publicly traded company, Gerson successfully navigated the aftereffects of the pandemic and a volatile economy with help from stakes in songs released by artists that defined music in 2022: Kendrick Lamar, Taylor Swift, The Weeknd, Bad Bunny, Harry Styles, Drake, Rosalía and Steve Lacy. UMPG also added the songs of Sting, Neil Diamond, Brian Wilson and Frank Zappa to its catalog. "Since I joined as chairman/CEO in 2015, our revenue has more than doubled, and 2022 was our best year yet," she says. It's not surprising then that UMPG was named publisher of the year at the 70th annual BMI Pop Awards and, Gerson says, its roster of songwriters earned an "unprecedented" number of nominations for the 2023 Grammys. UMPG also expanded its global business ties considerably in 2022, signing a global deal with China's RYCE Publishing and partnering with Univision Network, which services Spanish-speaking viewers in the United States, and Banijay, a French TV production and distribution firm. To bolster this worldwide reach, the company formed Global Creative Group, a new team of senior A&R specialists around the world who work together to identify and expand global creative opportunities for UMPG talent. Gerson notes that achieving these new heights is a result of true team effort: "Each and every UMPG employee plays a role in our success, and I am grateful to them all." —K.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 80.

> "Part of the success and evolution of a music company has to be about tech enablement and understanding the fans and the consumers that much better."
>
> —MAX LOUSADA, WARNER MUSIC GROUP

Power Players By Gender

The ratio of female-to-male executives in the ranking remains fairly steady — women are down one point this year, possibly because there are fewer executives on the list. That said, the power in the music industry remains largely in the hands of men.



Note: The Billboard Power List was not published in 2021 due to the pandemic.

GERSON ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

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HIPGNOSIS

24

Kevin Gore
PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL CATALOG, RECORDED MUSIC
Warner Music Group

As catalog keeps growing in importance — its share of overall U.S. album consumption increased from 69.8% in 2021 to 72.2% in 2022, according to Luminate — Gore says his team "has transformed" to meet demand with a two-pronged approach: delivering "innovative releases and marketing initiatives" for legends like Aretha Franklin and Joni Mitchell while "adding significant support to our front-line labels" around "shallow catalog" — releases by newer stars like Bruno Mars that are over 18 months old. One catalog track outshone them all in 2022: Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)," which became a massive hit after appearing in the fourth season of Netflix show *Stranger Things*. Gore calls the success of the song, which climbed all the way to No. 3 on the Hot 100 37 years after its release, "unprecedented."

DISTRIBUTORS

01

Brad Navin
CEO

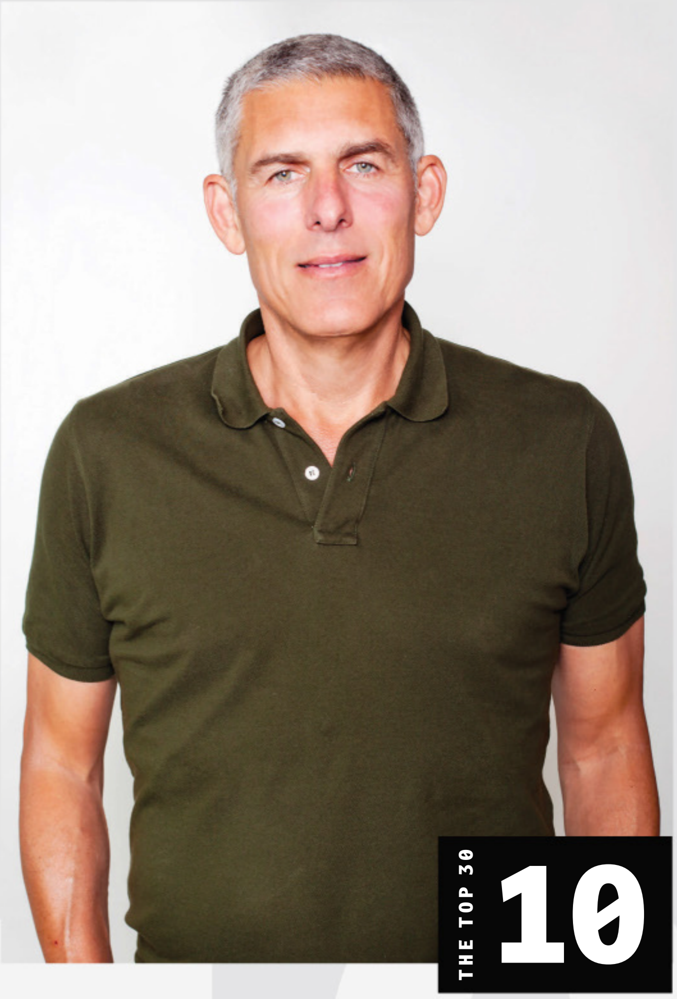
Colleen Theis
PRESIDENT/COO
The Orchard

See story, page 119.

02

Denis Ladegaillerie
FOUNDER/CEO
Believe

Since Ladegaillerie took Paris-based Believe public in mid-2021, the digital music distributor, which owns TuneCore, has scored significant market-share gains in Europe. In 2021, hits by French rappers JUL and Naps pushed Believe to No. 2 (behind Universal Music Group) for new releases in France, and last year, Believe was No. 3 (behind UMG and Sony Music) in the German streaming market thanks to names like Austrian hip-hop artist RAF Camora. With 1,600 employees in 50 countries supporting over 1 million artists, Believe's growth led Ladegaillerie to raise revenue forecasts to 750 million euros ($809.2 million) for 2022 — putting it among the ranks of BMG and HYBE. "We pride ourselves in supporting creators at all stages of their career to allow them to make a living from their art," he says. Believe was criticized for maintaining, and some say expanding, operations in Russia, and like many entertainment and tech stocks, the company's share price fell last year, over 42%. But Ladegaillerie, who owns more than 12% of the company's stock, has told investors 2023 will be a banner year for growth and acquisitions.



Lyor Cohen
GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC
GOOGLE/YOUTUBE

From July 2021 to June 2022, YouTube contributed over $6 billion to the music business, with 30% coming from user-generated content. Along with the revenue it drives for the industry, Cohen says he's proud of building new avenues for consumption over the last year, like YouTube Shorts — the company's short-form video component, which often features songs — and Creator Music, a library that helps video makers easily pay for and license music for their work. To spread the word, Cohen enlisted the help of superstar talent Taylor Swift, BTS, SZA, Blackpink and Camilo, and achieved significant growth for YouTube Shorts over the year. Ultimately, YouTube hopes to bridge the gap between short-form video (like TikTok, Triller and Shorts) and the content it has always been known for. So far, it seems to be working. Official artist channels uploading both Shorts and long-form video are experiencing better subscriber growth and overall watch time, and in April 2022, Shorts containing content sampled from long-form videos generated over 100 billion views. Cohen says he's proud of how "YouTube has gone from the most misunderstood to the most hopeful music industry partner." He vows that YouTube will "not rest on its laurels until it delivers on its mission to be the No. 1 revenue generator for the music industry." —K.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 82.

03

Cat Kreidich
PRESIDENT
Alternation Distribution Alliance Worldwide

Warner Music Group's purchase of two distributors — Africori in Africa and Qanawat in the Middle East — combined with an investment in Rotana, a leading indie label in those regions, has "significantly expanded" ADA's ability to help its artists and label partners make a global impact, says Kreidich. The company also had success with Spanish reggaetón/trap singer Quevedo, who topped the Billboard Global 200; British rapper Central Cee, whose single "Doja" — which, yes, name-checks Doja Cat — cracked that chart's top 20; and Louis Tomlinson, whose album *Faith in the Future* hit No. 5 on the Billboard 200. "It's easy to say music today is global," Kreidich adds. "It's another thing to have boots on the ground."

04

JT Myers
Nat Pasto
CO-CEOs
Virgin Music Group

Jacqueline Saturn
PRESIDENT
Virgin Music Label & Artist Services

In September, Universal Music Group acquired the label division of U.S. music company mtheory and appointed its founders, Myers and Pastor, to run Virgin Music Group, the global artist services entity that encompasses mtheory Artist Partnerships, Ingrooves and the Saturn-led Virgin Music Label & Artist Services. In 2021, Virgin hit pay dirt as the distributor for label Thrive Music's "Do It to It," a reinterpretation of Cherish's 2006 Hot 100 hit, by Florida producer Acraze. The track charted around the world, surpassing 1 billion global streams last year. The company also signed Montell Fish and The Game. "With all of the incredible success that Virgin has produced for artists," Saturn says, "the most rewarding thing to me is seeing our team come together in powerful ways to make it all happen."

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05

Philip Kaplan
FOUNDER/CEO
DistroKid

With 2022 revenue collections approaching $400 million, DistroKid is a rapidly growing force in the indie DIY distribution marketplace, and Kaplan says, "We're always working on new things we think musicians will love." In 2021, the company launched DistroVid.com, a user-friendly way for musicians to get full-length music videos onto Apple Music, Tidal, Vevo and other streaming platforms. There's also Spotify Canvas Generator, which creates kinetic album art; Mixea, an automated mastering service; and DistroPic.com, a free, artificial-intelligence image generator that can be used for such purposes as designing album art, Kaplan adds.

MULTISECTOR

01

Irving Azoff
CHAIRMAN/CEO
The Azoff Company

Jeffrey Azoff
COO
The Azoff Company
CEO
Full Stop Management

Elizabeth Collins
Susan Genco
CO-PRESIDENTS
The Azoff Company
See story, page 78.

02

Hartwig Masuch
CEO

Thomas Coesfeld
CFO

Dominique Casimir
CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER,
BMG

Thomas Scherer
PRESIDENT OF REPERTOIRE AND MARKETING, NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES
BMG Music Publishing

Jon Loba
PRESIDENT
BMG Nashville
See story, page 90.

03

Coran Capshaw
FOUNDER
Red Light Management
See story, page 94.

04

Bang Si-Hyuk
CHAIRMAN
HYBE

Scooter Braun
CEO
HYBE America
See story, page 98.

05

Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter
OWNER

Jay Brown
VICE CHAIRMAN

Desiree Perez
CEO
Roc Nation
See story, page 100.

06

Wassim "Sal" Slaiby
FOUNDER/CEO
SALXCO/XO
See story, page 108.

07

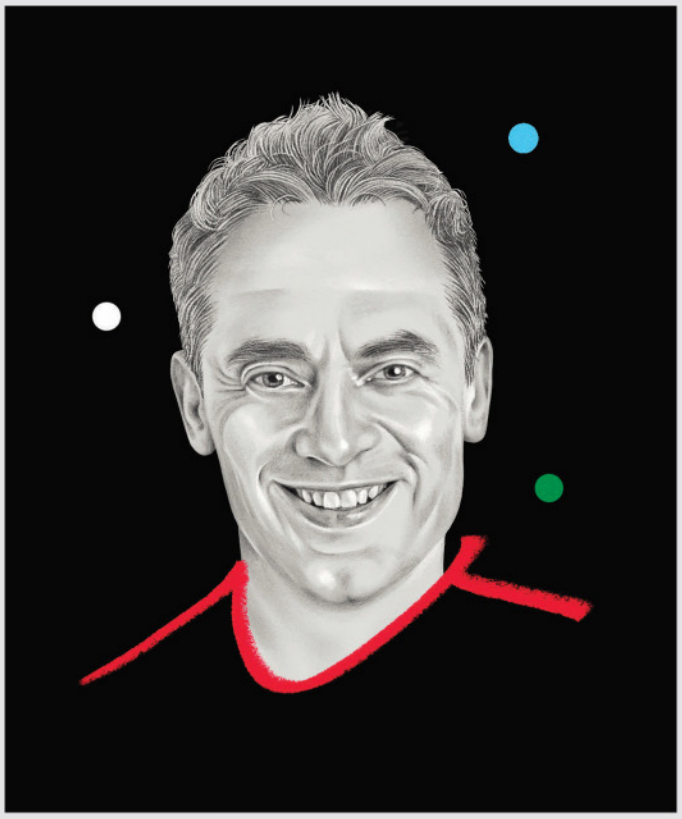
Noah Assad
FOUNDER/CEO
Rimas Entertainment
See story, page 66.

08

Scott Pascucci
CEO

Bob Valentine
PRESIDENT

Jim Selby
CHIEF PUBLISHING OFFICER
Concord
See story, page 114.



THE TOP 30
11

Steve Boom

VP OF AUDIO, TWITCH AND GAMES
AMAZON

With assets including a 55 million-subscriber music streaming platform, rights to *Thursday Night Football* and the world's biggest online store, veteran Amazon executive Boom and his music team wanted to expand "beyond an on-demand music streaming service," he says. "We thought, 'What happens on Thursday night? Oh, that's when all the music comes out.' " Thus, Amazon Music Live launched in October, a post-NFL-game concert series airing on the company's Prime Video service and Amazon Music's Twitch channel that has already starred 21 Savage, Anitta, A$AP Rocky, Kane Brown, Megan Thee Stallion and others. Amazon won't disclose viewer numbers, but Boom says the idea is to evolve from on-demand streaming to a destination "where music and sports and live entertainment all intersect." Amazon Music's other 2022 initiatives include expanding its Artist Merch Shop to sell exclusive items from J. Cole's Dreamville festival and concert videos from Tyler, The Creator, Kendrick Lamar and The Weeknd, and launching Amp, a radio app that features shows hosted by artists including Pusha T, Nicki Minaj and Halsey. Boom says the platform is also exploring using customers' on-demand streaming choices and merchandise purchases to improve the music recommendations it makes to them. "We all pay $10 a month to access all this music, but I'm probably willing to spend even more because I'm a huge fan," he says. "Amazon can bring a lot to bear there. It does open up the window to new monetization opportunities for artists." —STEVE KNOPPER

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 98.

BOOM ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: COURTESY OF AMAZON

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

Never The Same Old Song

From cutting-edge royalty claims to precedent-setting copyright defense, our team serves the music industry's ever-changing legal needs.

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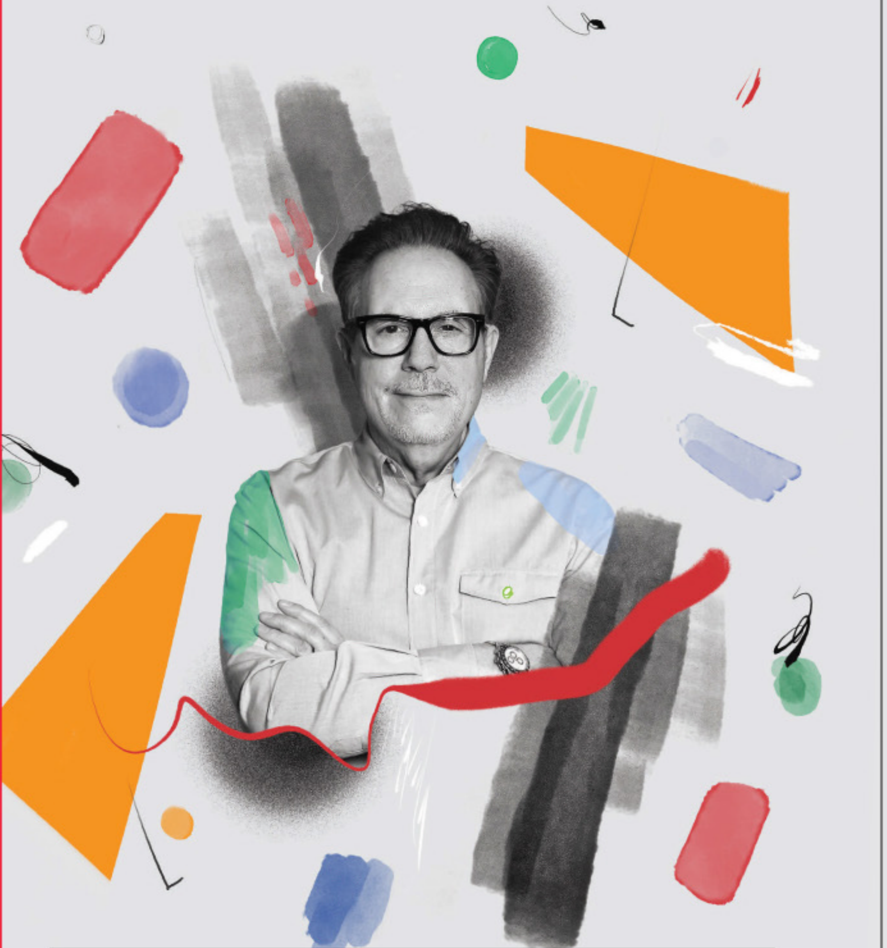

Jay Marciano

COO
AEG
CHAIRMAN/CEO
AEG PRESENTS

THE TOP 30
12

As CEO of one of the biggest privately held companies in entertainment, Marciano's challenge coming out of the pandemic has been to get the $10 billion AEG machine back up to cruising altitude. That has included pushing forward ventures like the construction of its venue at the $1 billion Nashville Yards project and a new 3,500-capacity venue in Raleigh, N.C., set to open next year. AEG has also opened three music clubs since the summer of 2021, including Roadrunner in Boston, part of the company's renewed effort, Marciano says, to expand its theater and club holdings after it hosted nearly 10,000 midsize events in 2022.

While AEG is much smaller than its competitor Live Nation, the company's concert promotion business handled four of 2022's top 10 tours. Elton John's Farewell Yellow Brick Road run, along with outings by The Rolling Stones (through Concerts West), Ed Sheeran and Kenny Chesney, grossed a total of $900 million. And this year, AEG is producing Taylor Swift's record-breaking Eras Tour (promoted by Messina Touring Group) and will work with rising artists Blackpink, which is headlining Coachella, and Karol G, as well as country music favorite Luke Combs.

Marciano says one of the highlights of last year "was walking onto the grounds of [Coachella site] the Empire Polo Club for the first time since 2019 and witnessing the sheer joy that both the artists and the audience exuded returning to the biggest music event on the planet." He also touts AEG's expanding Las Vegas residencies business through Resorts World hotel and casino, as well as the company's expansion into Singapore, where it helped host Southeast Asia's first pay-per-view event, *UFC 275: Teixeira vs. Prochazka*. —D.B.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 106.

09

Justin Kalifowitz
FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

Andrew Bergman
CEO
Downtown Music Holdings

Downtown completed its pivot from traditional publisher to one-stop label and artist services operation last year, restructuring itself into a creator-focused vertical — housing its digital distribution and publishing administration companies, CD Baby, Songtrust and Soundrop — and a business vertical — with FUGA, AdRev, Downtown Neighboring Rights and Downtown Music Services — to better align its offerings, which now serve some 2 million creators and businesses across 30 million tracks and 14 million YouTube assets. (AdRev's name surfaced in a federal investigation tied to $23 million in fraudulently claimed YouTube royalties, though the company is not accused of wrongdoing and is cooperating with the investigation.) The company also established a $200 million fund with Bank of America to advance money to independent songwriters — part of its mission, Bergman says, "to empower artists and businesses to remain independent and grow on their own terms."

10

John Josephson
CHAIRMAN/CEO
SESAC Music Group

A decade ago, SESAC operated mainly as a U.S. performing rights organization. Today, Josephson explains, it's "a multiline music group with operations across four industry verticals — performing rights, licensing and administration services, sonic branding and specialty music — [as well as] music content and resources for churches." In 2022, SESAC integrated parent company Blackstone's acquisition of eOne Music (since renamed MNRK Music Group and led by president/CEO Chris Taylor), put SESAC Music Group into the record-label and management business while adding to its music publishing portfolio. Audio Network, originally acquired by eOne, established SESAC in the production music business, and Audiam expanded its presence in mechanical licensing and YouTube royalty collections. Christian Copyright Licensing administers licensing to churches worldwide. Other businesses under the SESAC Music Group umbrella include synch licensing outfit Rumblefish and mechanical rights management firm the Harry Fox Agency, which services over 48,000 music publishing clients.

11

Martin Mills
CHAIRMAN
Beggars Group

The independent powerhouse that includes the labels 4AD, Rough Trade, Matador, XL and Young — which collectively released hit indie albums last year by Bartees Strange, Horsegirl, The Smile and Belle & Sebastian, among others — closed 2022 by earning a pair of Grammy nominations for breakout band Big Thief, as well as a best rock album nomination for *Lucifer on the Sofa* by veteran rockers Spoon. The latter band also returned to No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Triple A chart for the first time in five years. Mills is proud to "contribute to the global strength of independents."

12

Nelson Albareda
FOUNDER/CEO
Loud and Live

The Miami-based concert promoter and media/marketing firm closed 2022 with a record 400 shows and nearly 2 million tickets sold across the United States, Canada and Latin America for tours by such clients as Camilo, Ricardo Arjona and Carlos Vives. Albareda says Loud and Live, which launched in 2017, "achieved exponential growth" last year across live events, festivals, brands and content development. In December, the company signed a global partnership deal with Florida-based booking agency Tesa Entertainment. Panamanian artist Boza was the first act signed under the agreement. Loud and Live will also produce Miami's new Country Bay Music Festival, set to take place at Marine Stadium in November.

13

Ghazi
FOUNDER/CEO
EMPIRE

After enjoying wins in the United States with the rise of rappers Babyface Ray and Larry June, Ghazi has expanded his search for talent overseas, most notably in Africa. EMPIRE has emerged as a powerhouse in the world of Afrobeats with a roster that includes Nigeria's Fireboy DML and Kizz Daniel and Ghana's Black Sherif. "The continued growth and development of our team and artists in Africa has been remarkable," he says. "Over the past year, we have been able

LESTER COHEN

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

BIG LOUD

CONGRATULATES

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BILLBOARD POWER 100 HONOREE

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Billboard's First Power Players' Choice Award Goes To...

In 2023, *Billboard* introduces the Power Players' Choice Award, a peer-voted honor chosen by Billboard Pro members to honor the executive they believe has had the most impact across the music business in the past year. After more than 1,500 votes cast across three rounds of voting, Pro members selected Brandon Silverstein, founder/CEO of S10 Entertainment, for this year's award.

As a manager, Silverstein has helped build Anitta's and Normani's breakout careers, while moving S10 into publishing, recorded music and film/TV. Since expanding S10's publishing venture with Avex USA last year, the company now represents songwriters-producers-composers HARV (Justin Bieber's "Peaches") and Grammy winner Jasper Harris (Jack Harlow's "First Class"), among others.

"Being recognized by the music industry as one of the most powerful and impactful executives is an absolute honor," says Silverstein, who is a previous honoree on *Billboard*'s Latin Power Players and 40 Under 40 lists. "I'm proud of what we've built with S10 on a global level and the trust our artists and creatives have in me and my team." —COLIN STUTZ

The Barbz Vote Nicki Minaj Into 'Power'

After more than two weeks of voting in our inaugural Billboard.com bracket for the 2022 Power Artist: Fan Choice, Nicki Minaj emerged victorious, knocking out Beyoncé in the final round. The rap superstar had a banner 2022, scoring her first solo No. 1 on the Hot 100 with the NSFW Rick James flip "Super Freaky Girl" and teaming up with Lil Baby, Coi Leray, Fivio Foreign and BLEU for five more entries on the chart. A decade-plus since her 2009 *Billboard* chart debut, the Queen of Rap still wears the crown. —KATIE ATKINSON

THE TOP 30

13

Max Lousada

CEO, WARNER RECORDED MUSIC

WARNER MUSIC GROUP

The past year for WMG has been bookended by Grammy love, with superstar R&B duo Silk Sonic taking home record and song of the year at the 64th annual awards in April and WMG acts Anitta, Omar Apollo and Molly Tuttle scoring best new artist nods for the forthcoming 65th honors. It's a reflection of the major's dual role in nurturing big acts and developing up-and-coming artists. And increasingly, that means restructuring the company to better reflect a more global marketplace that is rich with options for acts to be heard — a focus for Lousada over the five years he has led WMG's recorded-music business. "We've created an ecosystem where we can do one-off records with [distributor] Level, partnerships and distribution solutions with [the Alternative Distribution Alliance] or bring in talent through Atlantic, Warner or 300 Elektra [Entertainment]," he says, emphasizing the company has new leaders in as many as 70% of the territories in which WMG operates, including Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, China, Japan and Nashville. "We've probably invested more in ex-Anglo markets than ever before," he says. "That's naturally a reflection of consumption, but we're the No. 1 company in [the Middle East and North Africa], we've opened offices in Israel, and we acquired leading distribution companies such as Qanawat in the Middle East and Africori in Africa. I think our value proposition and our offering has grown both in America and the rest of the world."

Lousada, who oversees close to $5 billion in revenue, is also keeping an enterprising eye on the tech sector, as the ubiquity of streaming and the inexorable rise of TikTok have upended how the record business operates and created a struggle for labels to ensure their artists are properly compensated for the use of their works in the digital space. Lousada sees his new boss, longtime YouTube chief business officer Robert Kyncl, as part of the solution to that ongoing puzzle. "Part of the success and evolution of a music company has to be about tech enablement and understanding the fans and the consumers that much better," he says. "Robert's background is going to give us that breadth of knowledge and experience to join fans and consumers alongside our artists and our music." —D.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 69.

SILVERSTEIN: MARTHA GALVAN. LOUSADA: BILLAL TARIGHT. MINAJ: ROWAN PAPIER.

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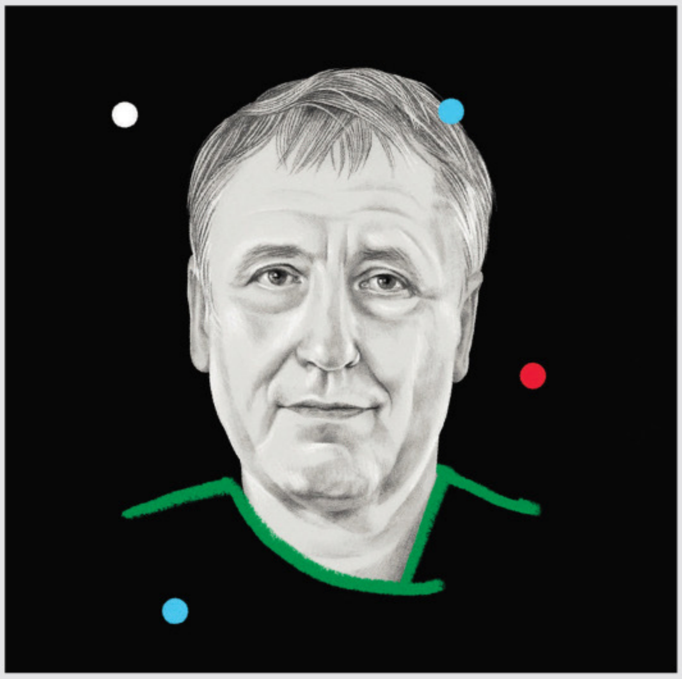

THE TOP 30 **14**

Hartwig Masuch

CEO
BMG

The Jan. 30 announcement that CFO Thomas Coesfeld will succeed Masuch as CEO at the beginning of 2024 comes at a logical time for the label and publishing group. After resurrecting BMG in 2008 and building it into the fourth-largest music company behind Universal, Sony and Warner, Masuch says the industry is undergoing a massive shift in power, away from the establishment players that have dominated it and toward digital service providers, digital marketers and financial firms. The trend, he adds, "threatens the value that record labels historically pitched to talent. If there are financial companies that have a bigger appetite for ownership than the traditional music companies, then obviously a lot of the loyalties of artists and rights holders will shift toward financially backed vehicles." That development, among others, is leading companies like BMG to find friends in finance — in addition to billions in backing from parent company Bertelsmann, it once again struck a partnership with KKR to acquire song catalogs in 2021 — and to rethink the value they bring to artists. "That means we have to be very cost-efficient, very reliable and value-driven," he says. "That's very different from the traditional role of a label," and one for which Coesfeld is well-suited. Masuch says BMG's business strategy led to global deals with Duran Duran, Bryan Adams and Louis Tomlinson, among other acts, and rapid financial growth. Although the label's 2022 current label market share totaled 1.42%, Masuch says BMG as a whole — including its publishing and catalog repertoire — would generate approximately $1.1 billion in annual revenue by 2024, reaching that key financial target two years ahead of schedule. The company has hired around 300 workers since the start of the pandemic and plans to hire another 150 to 200 in 2023 — turnover that Masuch says presents an opportunity and challenge. "If you have people who believe in a more traditional business model," says the native of Hagen, Germany, "you massively compromise your main selling point in this discussion." —ELIZABETH DILTS MARSHALL

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 84.

> "YouTube has gone from the most misunderstood to the most hopeful music industry partner. [It] will not rest on its laurels until it delivers on its mission to be the No. 1 revenue generator for the music industry."
>
> —LYOR COHEN, GOOGLE/YOUTUBE

to transport that success and the African music movement overall to all corners of the world." Last year, EMPIRE also bolstered its dance division by acquiring San Francisco-based Dirtybird Records.

14

Walter Kolm
FOUNDER/CEO
WK Entertainment/WK Records

WK Entertainment reaffirmed its position as one of the industry's leading artist management companies in 2022. Reggaetón stars Wisin & Yandel broke their own record with 14 shows at the Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot, and Maluma sold out arenas across Europe and Latin America, in addition to co-starring on the FIFA World Cup song "Tukoh Taka." "We also saw Prince Royce's triumphant post-pandemic return to the stage with his highly successful Classic Tour in the U.S. and Europe, as well as two key brand partnerships with Google Pixel and Ralph Lauren," says Kolm. In addition, the executive manages Colombian singer-songwriter Carlos Vives and breakout star Emilia, who earned four top 10s on the Billboard Argentina Hot 100. WK Entertainment and WK Records also expanded operations to Brazil.

15

Mike Caren
FOUNDER/CEO
Artist Partner Group/Artist Publishing Group

In 2022, Caren says, Artist Partner Group doubled its year-over-year sales and its catalog surpassed 50 million weekly streams. These gains were shored up by an expanded staff, with Caren noting that Artist Partner Group's "legacy of executive development continues to be as strong as its track record for songwriters and artists." Key launches included *Sleep Soul*, a series of soothing R&B albums for babies with Jhené Aiko and Taz Askew, and an addition to the *Fast Saga* music series, *The Fast & Furious: Drift Tape (Phonk Vol 1)*. Meanwhile, Artist Publishing Group expanded into the Afrobeats and country genres, clocking hits by Charlie Puth, YoungBoy Never Broke Again and Hitmaka.

16

Seth England
PARTNER/CEO
Big Loud

In 2022, Big Loud received *Billboard*'s top Hot Country Songs Label accolade for a second consecutive year on the strength of multiple successes by the label's roster of talent. Morgan Wallen set records with his song "You Proof," which has now topped the Country Airplay chart for 10 weeks, and his 2021 *Dangerous: The Double Album* finished last year at No. 3 on the Billboard 200 Albums year-end chart and at No. 5 on the Top Artists year-end list. Wallen also ruled the 2022 Top Country Artists chart and Top Country Artists-Male chart, while ERNEST ranked at No. 5 on the year-end Top New Country Artists chart. "I'm incredibly proud of the huge leaps we've made across touring and new music releases and especially excited to see some of our developing acts take that next step," says England, singling out such "game-changing" songs as ERNEST's "Flower Shops" (featuring Wallen) and HARDY's "wait in the truck" (featuring Lainey Wilson).

MASUCH ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: BARBARA DIETL

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

CONGRATULATIONS

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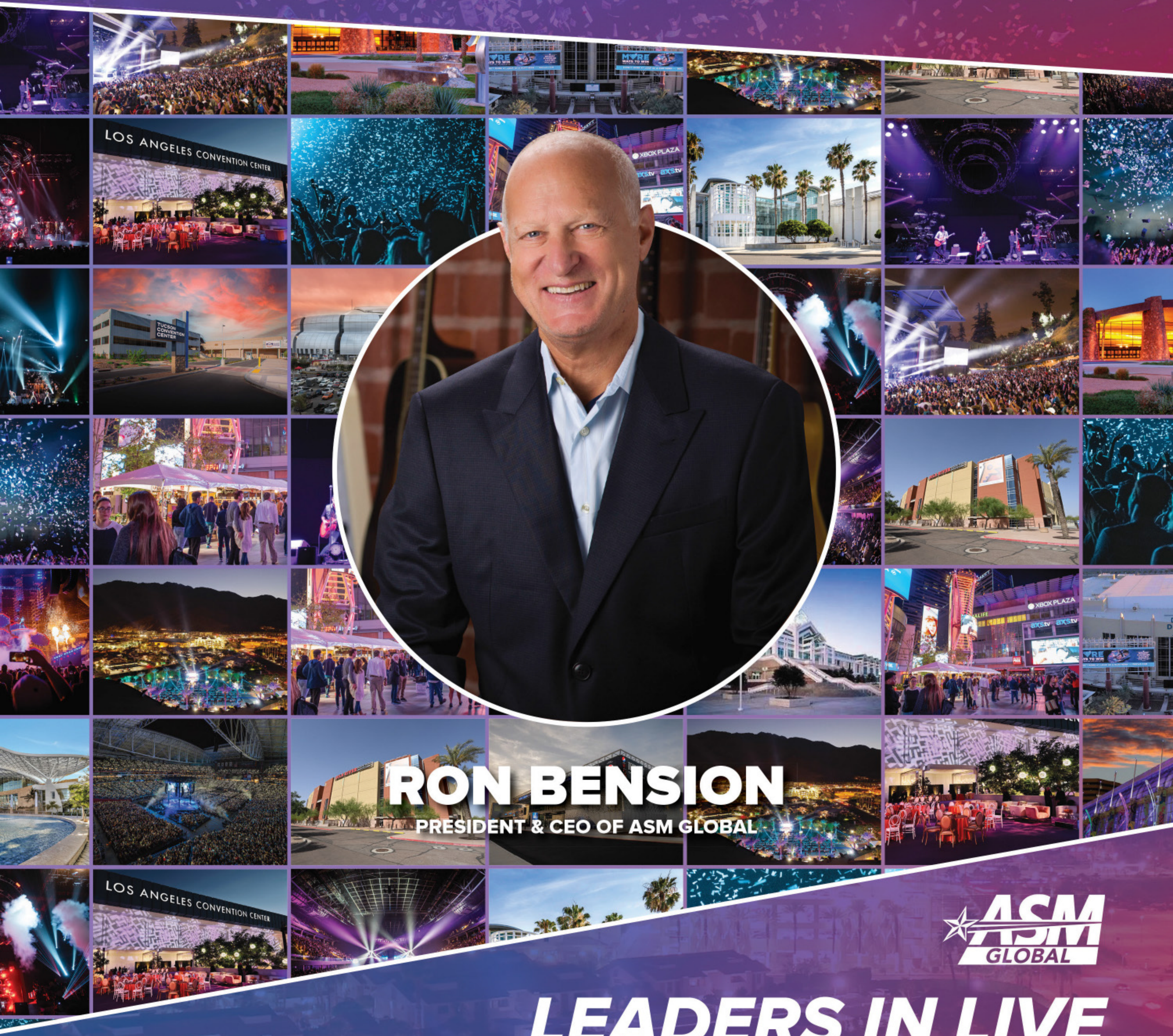
2022 ALL-STAR EXECUTIVE HONOREE



RON BENSION

PRESIDENT & CEO OF ASM GLOBAL

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Marshall (left) and Moot

THE TOP 30 **15**

Guy Moot

CO-CHAIR/CEO

Carianne Marshall

CO-CHAIR/COO

WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC

In January 2022, Warner Chappell Music "hit the ground running," as Moot puts it, by announcing the acquisition of David Bowie's song catalog for a reported $250 million. "We're so proud that his estate has chosen us to be the caretakers," she says. Bowie's iconic music enhances the company's already bountiful catalog, but Moot and Marshall say they put just as much effort into their frontline business. They added Belgian hip-hop artist Stromae and singer-songwriters Amy Allen and Lauren Spencer Smith to its roster last year, plus renewed deals with Chris Stapleton, Nicolle Galyon and the estate of George Michael. The publisher also continued to hold songwriter camps internationally, including its first gathering of all-female rappers. In addition, Moot and Marshall tapped into tech for evolution and growth. Warner Chappell Music was the first major music publisher to announce a Web3 partnership, joining forces with Defient to create Archives, a multidimensional, blockchain-powered digital museum, and funded the production of the podcast *Setting the Standard: Stories From the Great American Songbook* to expose that back catalog to new audiences. In August, Warner Chappell Music, along with its fellow publishers, celebrated a settlement in a rate-setting case that will raise streaming mechanical royalties for 2023-2027. "As music publishers," Marshall says, "we have a responsibility to our writers and their incredible bodies of work to protect the new global songwriter economy."

—K.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE BELOW.

17

Steve Stoute
FOUNDER/CEO
UnitedMasters

"In 2022, UnitedMasters set a new foundation for building a world where all creators own their future," says Stoute, who founded the digital distribution service in 2017. UnitedMasters artists Tobe Nwigwe and J. Ivy were both recognized with Grammy nominations; the company launched Beat Exchange, a curated marketplace to buy, license and sell beats; and Pepsi enlisted UnitedMasters to launch its Pepsi Music Lab, which identifies and fosters promising up-and-coming musicians. "Our music distribution broke through on the global charts, and a growing share of independent artists made money on our platform by partnering with the world's biggest brands," says Stoute. "Our accomplishments over the last year have pushed independent music into the mainstream."

PUBLISHING

01

Jon Platt
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Brian Monaco
PRESIDENT/GLOBAL CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

Rusty Gaston
CEO, NASHVILLE

Jorge Mejia
PRESIDENT/CEO, LATIN AMERICA AND U.S. LATIN
Sony Music Publishing

See story, page 79.

02

Jody Gerson
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Marc Cimino
COO

Troy Tomlinson
CHAIRMAN/CEO, NASHVILLE

Alexandra Lioutikoff
PRESIDENT, LATIN AMERICA AND U.S. LATIN
Universal Music Publishing Group

See story, page 80.

03

Guy Moot
CO-CHAIR/CEO

Carianne Marshall
CO-CHAIR/COO

Ryan Press
PRESIDENT, NORTH AMERICA

Gustavo Menéndez
REGIONAL GM, LATIN AMERICA
Warner Chappell Music

Ben Vaughn
PRESIDENT/CEO
Warner Chappell Music Nashville

See story, above.

04

Larry Mestel
FOUNDER/CEO

Justin Shukat
PRESIDENT
Primary Wave Music

In 2022, Primary Wave snapped up more than 20 catalogs to add to its growing collection of assets by "legends and icons," says Mestel, including

JONATHAN WEINER

BILLBOARD POWER 100

MESSINA TOURING GROUP

powerful *adjective* 1 influential, high-powered, important, commanding, potent, dynamic 2 compelling, convincing, impressive, persuasive, effective, eloquent

MTG MESSINA TOURING GROUP

LOUIS MESSINA
CEO, Messina Touring Group

HALEY MCCOLLISTER
President, MTG Nashville

the rights to music by The Ramones, Huey Lewis & The News, America, Toto and Paul Rodgers; the company also bought rights from the estate of James Brown and closed the probate legal proceedings to take control of the music assets of Prince's estate. In addition, Primary embarked on its most ambitious "reintroduction" campaign to promote the career and music of Whitney Houston, which was capped by the December release of the biopic *I Will Always Love You*. But Primary's biggest milestone was the $2.3 billion cash injection by Brookfield Asset Management in October, which Mestel calls "an enormous, transformational deal" that means "there is no good deal we can't close."

> "There is no good deal we can't close."
>
> —LARRY MESTEL, PRIMARY WAVE MUSIC

SARAH CRAMER SHIELDS

THE TOP 30

16

Coran Capshaw

FOUNDER

RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

As the live sector roared back to life in 2022, Red Light Management — the industry's largest independent artist-management company — provided plenty of fuel. Capshaw says approximately 250 of RLM's 400 acts were on the road, with seven of them — Chris Stapleton, Phish, Dave Matthews Band, Luke Bryan, ODESZA, Styx and Brandi Carlile — ranking on Billboard Boxscore's Top Tours chart of 2022 with a combined gross of over $300 million. *Billboard* estimates that, all told, RLM acts rang up $700 million at the box office last year, although Capshaw, who doesn't like to talk numbers with dollar signs in front of them — or give interviews — won't confirm the figure. He prefers to discuss his artists' philanthropic contributions. He says Lexington, Ky.-born Stapleton traveled twice to his home state for concerts that raised upward of $4.5 million for charitable initiatives, including the Kentucky Rising flood relief benefit concert, which also featured state natives Dwight Yoakam, Tyler Childers and Patty Loveless. Stapleton also led the winners at the Country Music Association Awards in November, including a record sixth win for male vocalist of the year. RLM client Lainey Wilson took home new artist and female vocalist of the year honors, and Jordan Davis' "Buy Dirt," which he co-wrote, won song of the year. Carlile also made headlines when she brought Joni Mitchell to the Newport Folk Festival in July, where Mitchell performed her first full set in more than 20 years. The legend of Laurel Canyon, Calif., is also slated to join Carlile for her three-night weekend engagement at The Gorge Amphitheater in George, Wash., in June. Capshaw, whose business interests include ATO Records and stakes in a number of music festivals, including Outside Lands and South by Southwest (in which *Billboard*'s parent company, PMC, also holds a stake), says he's bullish on the live business in the coming year. "Everything that has gone on sale has done really well, with a lot of on-sales to come," he says of RLM's planned tours. "We're very happy that people are continuing to embrace the live experience. Fans are going to shows." —F.D.

05

Merck Mercuriadis

FOUNDER/CEO

Hipgnosis Song Management, Hipgnosis Songs Fund, Hipgnosis Songs Capital (in partnership with Blackstone)

In a year when Mercuriadis' Hipgnosis spent $600 million buying stakes in songs by Justin Timberlake, Leonard Cohen, Nile Rodgers, Kenny Chesney, Nelly Furtado, Tobias Jesso Jr. and TMS, he says the fund closed its biggest deal yet: acquiring stakes in Justin Bieber's publishing and recorded-music catalogs, which *Billboard* reported is worth just over $200 million. Mercuriadis says the deal demonstrates that catalog's "importance over the last 12 years to a young audience that will be playing those songs for decades to come." A $600 million budget is nothing to sniff at, but it is down from the $1 billion Hipgnosis spent in 2021, in part because Hipgnosis Songs Fund was fully invested by September 2021. Higher interest rates and more competition present challenges, and in a December presentation to shareholders, Mercuriadis called Hipgnosis Songs Fund's share price, which fell by 31% in 2022, disappointing for a company owning shares of 13 of YouTube's 30 most streamed songs to date. Looking forward, Mercuriadis told investors on the call that Hipgnosis' deal pipeline was strong — it has an interest in 35 of the 100 best-selling albums of 2022, as well as Hot 100 chart-toppers "Super Freaky Girl" by Nicki Minaj and "Heat Waves" by Glass Animals. The trick will be matching or beating that success while also managing investors' concerns over the stock's falloff and current economic conditions facing the market sector.

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Chairman
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06

Willard Ahdritz
FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN

Laurent Hubert
CEO
Kobalt Music Group

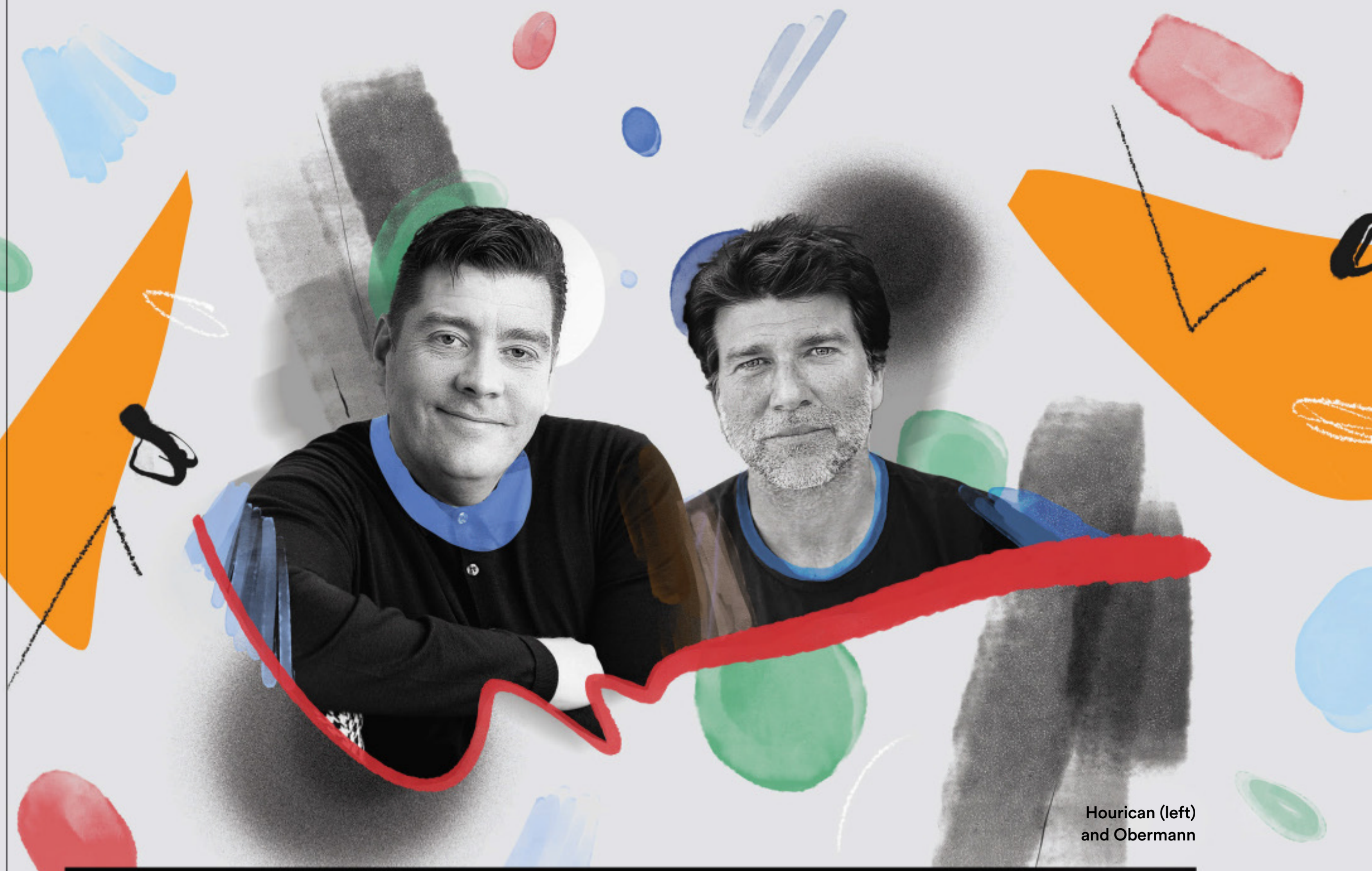
Hits from Jack Harlow, Beyoncé and Adele, and the Kobalt Music Group songwriters who co-wrote them — Rogét Chahayed, Adam Pigott, Freddie Ross and Max Martin — helped Kobalt's core publishing business once again make a strong showing on U.S. *Billboard* charts last year and end its fiscal year with close to 15% of the second quarter's top 100 Radio Airplay songs. But the company's strategic shifts may lay the groundwork for even bigger accomplishments ahead. In September, Kobalt announced it sold a controlling stake to private equity investors Francisco Partners, along with smaller stakes to Matt Pincus' Music Inc. and Dundee Partners, for a total investment worth over $1 billion. "They were the right partners to take Kobalt into its next growth phase," says Ahdritz — a phase in which Kobalt will double down on its core publishing business and its global digital collections society, AMRA. Ahdritz and Hubert say they want to expand AMRA's reach "to continue to innovate for the benefit of creators and rights owners."

07

Ralph Peer II
EXECUTIVE CHAIR

Mary Megan Peer
CEO
peermusic

In addition to continuing peermusic's longtime advocacy for creators' rights around the world, the Peers and other top company executives sit on the boards or forums of various countries' collection management organizations on five continents. In 2022, peermusic cut a deal to serve as subpublisher for Hipgnosis for the rest of the world outside the United States, and as the globe began to shake off the pandemic, Mary Megan says the company's creative team gave its songwriters "cross-cultural collaboration" opportunities that brought together peermusic writers in Sweden, Korea and Japan. The result: nine No. 1 singles in Korea, four in Japan, one in China and No. 1 iTunes tracks in 28 countries. In September, the company also conducted a songwriting camp — hosted by production duo SOS and writer Larry Gaaga — in Lagos, Nigeria, for 18 up-and-coming local writers, as well as a number of peermusic's U.S. and U.K. songwriters.



Hourican (left) and Obermann

Ole Obermann

GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC

Paul Hourican

GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC OPERATIONS
TIKTOK

THE TOP 30 **17**

TikTok is in the midst of renewing its agreements with music rights holders worldwide — and, unsurprisingly, this time the rights holders want more from the Chinese short-form video platform as the renegotiations of those agreements enter the next phase. As Believe CEO Denis Ladegaillerie said in November, he expects a "significant increase" in the Paris-based distribution company's TikTok payouts. The man leading those talks from TikTok's side is Obermann, and when asked about the weather in the rooms where these discussions are taking place, he says, "We see sunshine at the end of it." Obermann knows many of his counterparts in these negotiations, having spent over a decade at Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group. "Since tech disrupted the music industry, there has always been friction, concern and a little bit of pumping the brakes," Obermann says. "We are already paying out a lot of money to music rights holders." Regardless of whether recorded-music companies are slow-walking deals with TikTok, its influence keeps growing exponentially. Among Obermann's proudest accomplishments in 2022 was the meteoric rise of artists like Nicky Youre, whose feel-good song "Sunroof," with dazy, hit No. 4 on the Hot 100; topped the Hot 100 Songwriters chart; and landed Youre a Columbia Records deal after advertisers used it in TikTok videos. The song was available for royalty-free commercial use through TikTok's commercial music library, and it's a case study for the kind of win-win-win Obermann says TikTok can offer. "Our ambition is to build a whole suite of music-oriented services that will help drive growth for artists, the music industry and TikTok," he says. While he declines to discuss details, Obermann says the industry can expect more connections between TikTok and ByteDance's music-streaming app, Resso, but refutes reports TikTok is building a full-fledged A&R department. While he confirms TikTok has "hired" a handful of A&R staff to work at its music and distribution platform, SoundOn, Obermann says the aim is to get unsigned artists to use SoundOn, which often leads to getting signed somewhere else. As for TikTok's ongoing negotiations with the United States over data security and reports that states and colleges are banning the app, Obermann declined to comment. "I oversee music, and as a result, I am not involved in these regulatory topics. [They do] not touch my day-to-day," he says. "What is important to me is that there is an understanding around the really important role that TikTok plays [in] the discovery of new artists and the breaking of artists worldwide." —E.D.M.

HOURICAN, OBERMANN: COURTESY OF TIKTOK

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

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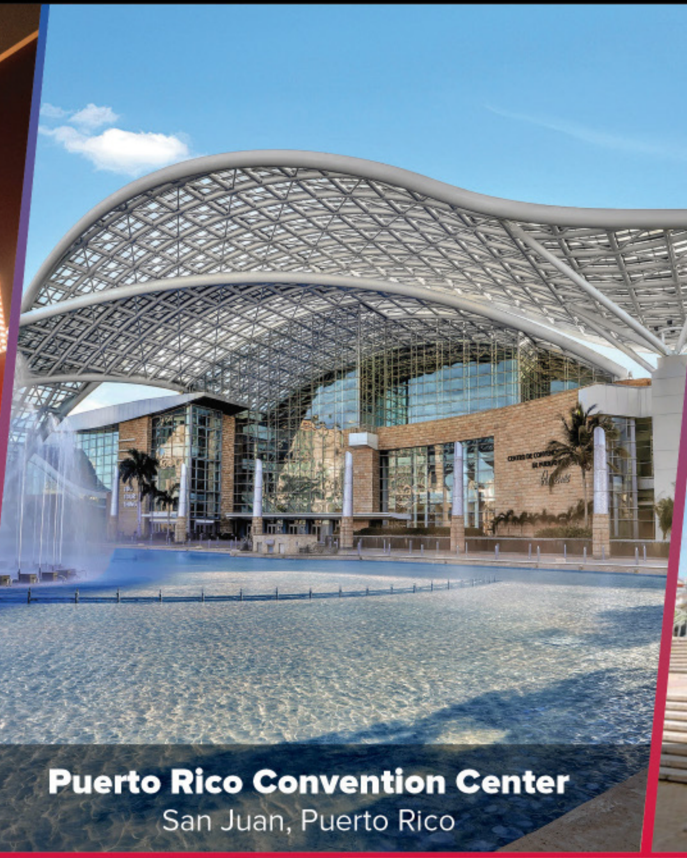
San Juan, Puerto Rico



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97 THEATERS

THE TOP 30

18

Bang Si-Hyuk

CHAIRMAN

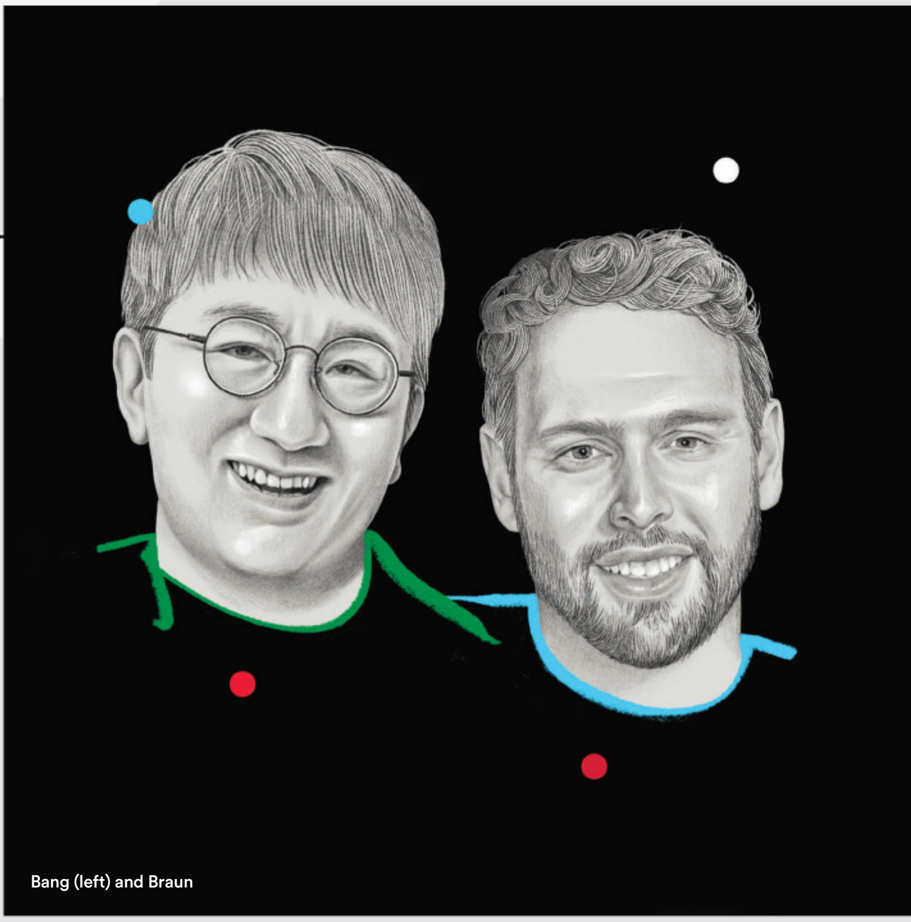
HYBE

Scooter Braun

CEO

HYBE AMERICA

South Korea's HYBE wasn't caught flat-footed when its cash cow, K-pop group BTS, announced in June 2022 that it would take a hiatus to pursue solo projects and fulfill mandatory military service. The news dropped HYBE's share price 24.8% the following day and, as stocks fell worldwide, contributed to $2.8 billion of lost market capitalization by October. It could have been worse had "Hitman" Bang, as he's known professionally, not used the proceeds of HYBE's $840 million initial public offering in 2020 to begin building a bridge to the United States and beyond. In 2021, HYBE acquired Ithaca Holdings, an umbrella company for Braun's management firm and Nashville-based Big Machine Label Group, then made Braun co-CEO of HYBE America. (He is now the sole holder of that title.) The deal gave HYBE a footprint in the United States and helped soften the blow of losing BTS. "HYBE America is pivotal to HYBE's future both strategically, by giving us a footprint in the biggest music market in the world, and in terms of diversifying our capabilities with key assets and talent," the company said in a statement to *Billboard*. In the States, Braun client Demi Lovato's latest album, *Holy Fvck*, hit No. 7 on the Billboard 200. Big Machine inked a partnership with hip-hop label Blac Noize! Recordings and scored a hit with GloRilla and Hitkidd's song "F.N.F. (Let's Go)." Ultimately, though, HYBE is thinking globally. In December, it launched a label, NAECO, in its third hub, Japan, and debuted an international boy band, &TEAM, with members from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. HYBE's ace in the hole is Weverse, its in-house social media platform. Already key for promoting artists in Korea, Weverse will soon add HYBE's artists in America and Japan, the company says. —GLENN PEOPLES



Bang (left) and Braun

08

Golnar Khosrowshahi

FOUNDER/CEO

Reservoir Media

"I pinch myself every day at the caliber of songwriters, artists and catalogs that call Reservoir their home," says Khosrowshahi of the music publisher's 2022. The year after she led her company to its biggest acquisition yet, Tommy Boy Music — the label that launched the careers of such hip-hop heavyweights as Queen Latifah, Coolio, De La Soul and Afrika Bambaataa — welcomed over a dozen new front-line writers and catalogs in 2022, including Oak Felder, Killer Mike, Snarky Puppy, Phil Manzanera, Emeli Sandé, Henry Jackman, Matt Sorum, Travis Tritt, Nick Lee and the late Fred Rister and Louis Prima. As board director at the National Music Publishers' Association, Khosrowshahi says she was happy that the rate-setting case Phonorecords IV — which determines mechanical streaming royalties for the years 2023 to 2027 and locks in royalties at upward of 15.1% of music streaming service revenue — was settled. She notes, "I was honored to advocate alongside [president/CEO] David Israelite and the NMPA team to usher in this landmark settlement."

STREAMING & RADIO

01

Daniel Ek

FOUNDER/CEO

Dawn Ostroff

FORMER CHIEF CONTENT AND ADVERTISING BUSINESS OFFICER

Jeremy Erlich

VP/GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC

See story, page 76.

02

Oliver Schusser

VP, APPLE MUSIC AND INTERNATIONAL

Amanda Marks

GLOBAL HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MUSIC PARTNERSHIPS, APPLE INTERNET AND SOFTWARE SERVICES

Apple Music

See story, page 77.

03

Lyor Cohen

GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC

Google/YouTube

Christophe Muller

VP OF MUSIC LICENSING

Vivien Lewit

GLOBAL HEAD OF ARTISTS

Stephen Bryan

GLOBAL HEAD OF LABEL RELATIONS

Tuma Basa

DIRECTOR OF BLACK MUSIC AND CULTURE

YouTube

See story, page 82.

04

Steve Boom

VP OF AUDIO, TWITCH AND GAMES

Amazon

Ryan Redington

VP OF MUSIC INDUSTRY

Rishi Mirchandani

VP OF LICENSING AND STRATEGY

Amazon Music

See story, page 84.

BANG ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: COURTESY OF HYBE. BRAUN ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: BRADFORD ROGNE.

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

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TIM LEIWEKE
Chairman & CEO

FRANCESCA BODIE
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OVG
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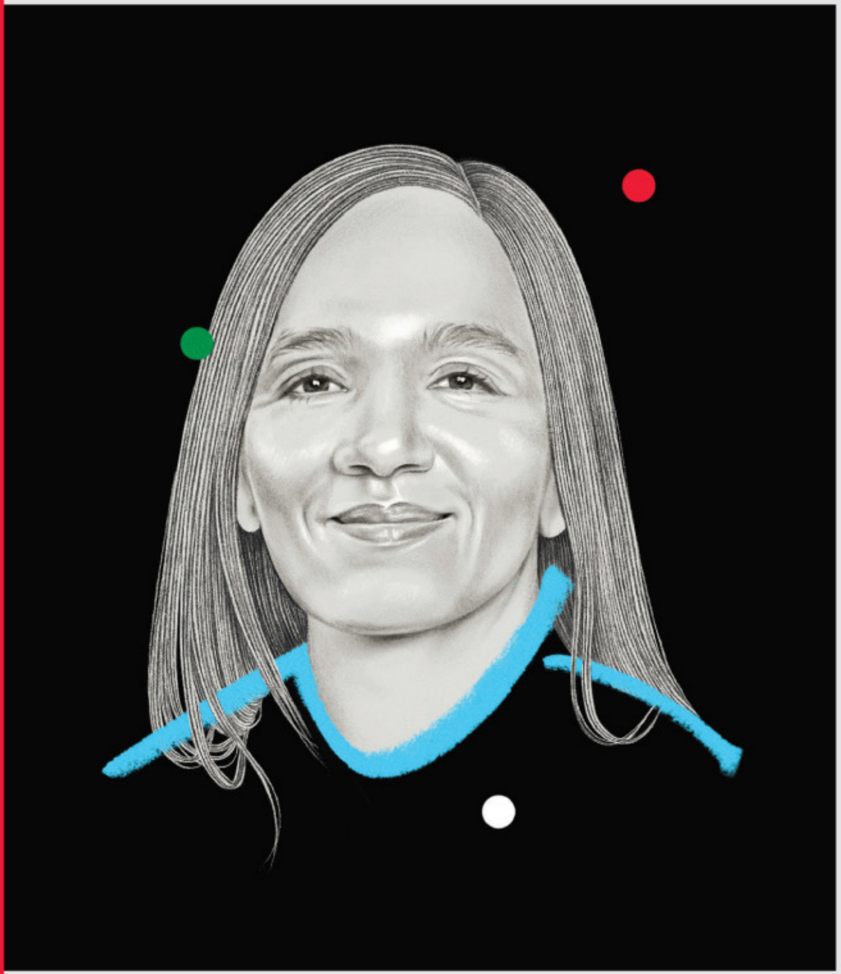


THE TOP 30

19

Desiree Perez

CEO

ROC NATION

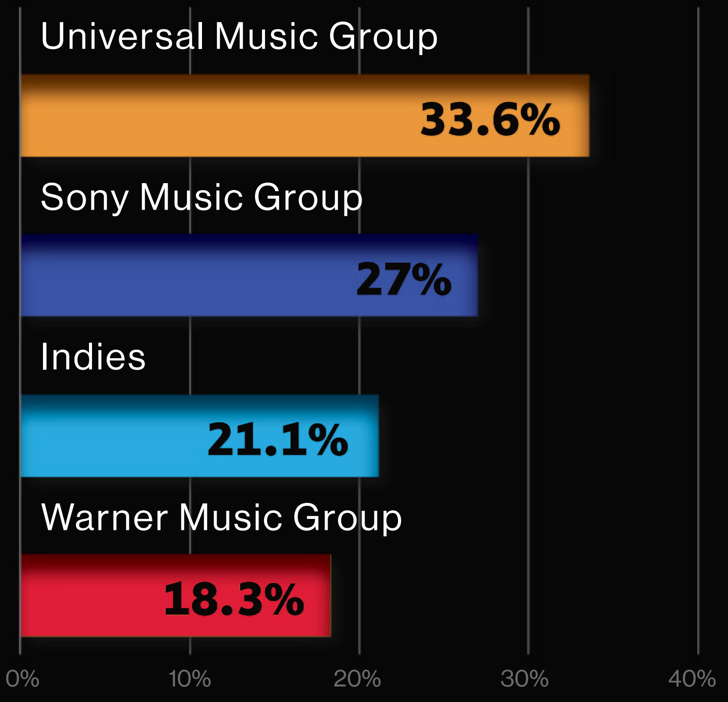
As Roc Nation has grown over the past 15 years, it has found ways to flex its muscles in almost every area of entertainment, including the biggest stage of them all: the Super Bowl Halftime Show. Roc's partnership with the NFL for its marquee performance space is entering its fourth year, and in 2022 put on the first-ever hip-hop-helmed halftime show, with Dr. Dre leading the way in his native Los Angeles in a showcase that also included Snoop Dogg, Eminem, Kendrick Lamar, Mary J. Blige, 50 Cent and Anderson .Paak. The event won an Emmy for outstanding variety special (live). They will use that launching pad to reintroduce Rihanna's music career on Feb. 12, as she headlines halftime — presented for the first time by Apple Music — before the release of her long-awaited next album, which she heralded with the *Black Panther* soundtrack song "Lift Me Up," itself a Golden Globe-nominated release. The 10th anniversary of Roc Nation's Made in America festival in Philadelphia in September (which was headlined by Bad Bunny), along with Megan Thee Stallion serving as the host/musical guest on *Saturday Night Live* in October and a second straight No. 1 album from DJ Khaled, were "evidence that the Roc Nation family continues to grow in every way," Perez says. —D.R.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 84.

> "Since tech disrupted the music industry, there has always been friction, concern and a little bit of pumping the brakes. We are already paying out a lot of money to music rights holders."
>
> —OLE OBERMANN, TIKTOK

Year-End Current Market Share By Group

Universal Music Group maintained its position at No. 1, but Sony Music Group surged in 2022 thanks to a huge year for artists like Bad Bunny and Harry Styles, followed by the entire independent sector in third and Warner Music Group in fourth.



PEREZ ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: JOHNNY NUNEZ/WIREIMAGE

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

CONGRATULATIONS

MITCH GLAZIER

RIAA CHAIRMAN & CEO

2023 billboard

POWER 100

RIAA FOR MUSIC

PHOTO BY OTHELLO BANACI

Avery (left) and Monte Lipman

DAVID NEEDLEMAN

05

Ole Obermann
GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC

Paul Hourican
GLOBAL HEAD OF MUSIC OPERATIONS
TikTok

See story, page 96.

06

Bob Pittman
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Tom Poleman
PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMMING GROUP/CHIEF PROGRAMMING OFFICER

John Sykes
PRESIDENT OF ENTERTAINMENT ENTERPRISES
iHeartMedia

In addition to reaching 90% of Americans monthly through its 860 traditional radio stations, says Pittman, iHeartMedia is the top podcast publisher "in both revenue and profitability," he adds, and recently expanded into the metaverse with the music/gaming platform #iHeartLand within both Fortnite and Roblox. Pittman, who with Sykes co-founded MTV in the early 1980s, says the broadcast giant's "massive reach" will allow it to "support our on-air personalities and give them the resources and tools they need to continue to grow," as well as keep breaking new artists such as Steve Lacy, JAX and Lainey Wilson.

07

Jennifer Witz
CEO

Scott Greenstein
PRESIDENT/CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER
SiriusXM

The satellite radio giant's top two programming executives used their platform as "the largest audio company in North America," according to Witz, by helping launch Conan O'Brien's Team Coco Radio, breaking stars such as Coco Jones through its artist accelerator program and overseeing Howard Stern's Bruce Springsteen interview and Drake's *Table for One* show. "We continue to enhance our easy-to-use, superior in-car user experience and extend this approach to our streaming products," Witz says. Adds Greenstein: "Our service provides a daily connection for listeners with its unmatched diverse and premium live programming."

THE TOP 30 **20**

Monte Lipman
FOUNDER/CEO

Avery Lipman
FOUNDER/COO
REPUBLIC RECORDS

For the second consecutive year, Republic topped all three of *Billboard*'s leading year-end label rankings: Top Labels, Billboard 200 Labels and Billboard Hot 100 Labels. Under the Lipman brothers' leadership, Republic placed 72 albums on the Billboard 200, including the most that reached the top 10 (23) and top 40 (40). They included five No. 1s, among them Taylor Swift's *Red (Taylor's Version)* and *Midnights*, and Drake's *Honestly, Nevermind* (released on OVO Sound/Republic). The label also placed more overall entries (119), top 40 hits (60), top 10s (21) and No. 1s (five) on the Hot 100 than any other label. And in October, Swift became the first artist to fill the entire top 10 of the Hot 100 with tracks from *Midnights*. "It's an honor to work with such a diverse roster and compete at the highest level, which is never lost on me," Monte says, adding that the "entrepreneurial" label encourages executives to "operate with independence and autonomy." —S.K.

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 69.

CONGRATULATIONS

BILLBOARD POWER 100 LIST

HONOREE

NMPA PRESIDENT & CEO

DAVID ISRAELITE

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08

Michael Weissman
CEO

Eliah Seton
PRESIDENT

Lauren Wirtzer-Seawood
CHIEF CONTENT AND MARKETING OFFICER
SoundCloud

Last July, SoundCloud made headlines when it struck a global licensing deal with Warner Music Group to use its user-centric "fan-powered royalties" model, which Weissman says fosters deeper relationships between artists and fans when combined with on-platform tools that "empower communication" between them: "[Fan-powered royalties] make the artist and fan relationship two-way for the first time in two decades of streaming," he says. The company also made strides in reinventing itself as a distribution and artist/label services operation by establishing a joint venture with Quality Control's Solid Foundation; signing direct partnerships with such artists as Lil Pump, Tekno and Kelow LaTesha; and launching SoundCloud for Artists.

LIVE

01

Michael Rapino
PRESIDENT/CEO, LIVE NATION ENTERTAINMENT

Arthur Fogel
PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL TOURING;
CHAIRMAN, LIVE NATION CONCERTS

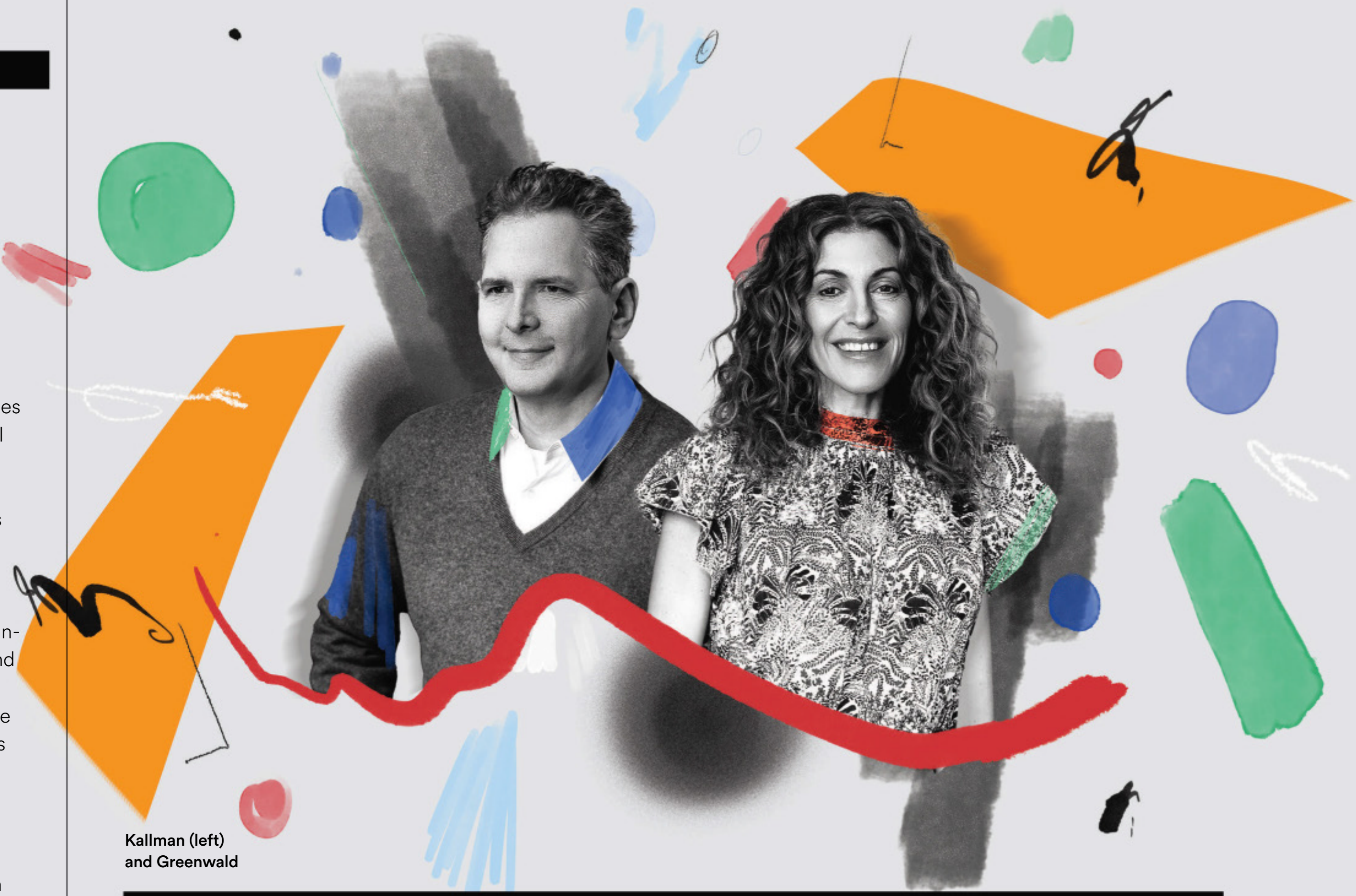
Bob Roux
PRESIDENT OF U.S. CONCERTS

Russell Wallach
PRESIDENT OF MEDIA SPONSORSHIP

Lesley Olenik
SENIOR VP OF GLOBAL TOURING

Omar Al-joulani
PRESIDENT OF TOURING, LIVE NATION CONCERTS
Live Nation

See story, page 71.



Kallman (left)
and Greenwald

THE TOP 30 **21**

Julie Greenwald

CHAIRMAN/CEO
ATLANTIC MUSIC GROUP

Craig Kallman

CHAIRMAN/CEO
ATLANTIC RECORDS

One way to know what kind of 2022 the newly christened Atlantic Music Group had is to check its stats — its two biggest labels alone, Atlantic Records and 300 Elektra Entertainment, finished the year with a combined current market share of 9.15%. Another is to look at *Saturday Night Live*, where three AMG artists did double duty as musical guest and host: Lizzo, Megan Thee Stallion and Jack Harlow. "They don't just give that out," says Greenwald, who was promoted to run AMG in October. Her promotion, she says, "allows Craig to focus on Atlantic, [3EE CEO Kevin Liles] to really rock and run Elektra and 300 [and] I'm here to help wherever I'm needed."

How is business?

To me, it always comes down to the fact that I had a great year with artists. New artists like Fred Again.., established artists like Coldplay, Ed Sheeran and Silk Sonic. Lizzo was a quadruple threat — she raps, she sings, she writes her music, she won an Emmy for her TV show [on Amazon Prime], she had an incredible documentary on HBO Max and a concert special on New Year's Eve. Plus an arena tour that sold out very fast. Jack Harlow sold out arenas and wants to tour this fall. And that is one of the most important stories that we can tell: We're not just building artists on the streaming platforms. We're selling the hard tickets — people are coming to their shows.

How have marketing and promotion changed in the age of TikTok?

You cannot build a campaign around TikTok. It doesn't work. You're building an artist campaign. You need to think about how you have conversations on different platforms where the consumer is listening to or learning about music: TikTok, or Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts. There's so much choice out there now, and people are scattered. Our job is to grab them and remind them, "Yo, go back and listen to our record." Because streaming is never, "Oh, we got you one time, and now we're done." We've got to keep reminding you why you should listen to us while working out, while you're hanging out — whatever it may be. You have to have the commitment and the belief to build out the plan for 12 months. You've got to stay in the fight, man.

—JOE LEVY

KALLMAN, GREENWALD: NOA GRIFFEL

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

Dear Kenny and Joe,

Congratulations

on being included in

Billboard’s Power 100.

It is so well deserved, and both of you make such an enormous contribution to the firm.

GRUBMAN
SHIRE
MEISELAS &
SACKS

ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA LAWYERS

02

Jay Marciano
COO, AEG
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Rick Mueller
PRESIDENT OF NORTH AMERICA

Gary Gersh
PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL TOURING

Paul Tollett
PRESIDENT/CEO, GOLDENVOICE

Melissa Ormond
COO, GOLDENVOICE
COO OF FESTIVALS
AEG Presents

See story, page 86.

03

Ron Bension
PRESIDENT/CEO
ASM Global

See story, page 118.

04

Henry Cárdenas
FOUNDER/CEO
CMN

CMN's No. 3 ranking on Billboard Boxscore's 2022 end-of-year Top Promoters list was the cherry on top of the company's biggest year yet, says Cárdenas, as well as "a testament to the strength of our music and the entrepreneurial power of Hispanics." The independent Latin company produced Bad Bunny's World's Hottest Tour, which grossed $232.5 million, and broke the Boxscore record for highest one-month gross with a take of $123.7 million. CMN also produced Daddy Yankee's farewell tour, which was the second-biggest in revenue, and promoted live outings by Latin music heavyweights Marc Anthony, Nicky Jam, Christian Nodal, Banda MS and Ana Gabriel.

05

Louis Messina
FOUNDER/CEO

Haley McCollister
PRESIDENT, NASHVILLE OFFICE
Messina Touring Group

Kenny Chesney finally set out on his *Here and Now* tour in 2022 after AEG partner Messina Touring Group put the dates on sale more than three years prior. Chesney's road work vaulted him to No. 9 on Billboard Boxscore's year-end Top Tours ranking with a gross of $135 million and

Janick (left)
and Berman

THE TOP 30 **22**

John Janick

CHAIRMAN/CEO

Steve Berman

VICE CHAIRMAN
INTERSCOPE GEFFEN A&M

"There are so many milestones we reached as a label in 2022," says Berman. And in the year when Interscope celebrated its 30th anniversary, building its artists' brands through visual media was among the biggest. The year began with "Artists Inspired by Music: Interscope Reimagined," an exhibit at the Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art that paired over 50 of the label's acts, including Dr. Dre, Billie Eilish, Lady Gaga and Nine Inch Nails, with some of contemporary art's biggest names — among them, Cecily Brown, Damien Hirst, Ed Ruscha and Takashi Murakami. "It's extraordinary when you think that Interscope's music resonated so powerfully with the most successful visual artists in the world that they all dropped everything they were doing to come be a part of it," Berman said in a 2022 *Billboard* interview.

Then in February, Dr. Dre led a performance of some of the label's and hip-hop's biggest acts — Snoop Dogg, Eminem, Kendrick Lamar, Mary J. Blige, 50 Cent and Anderson .Paak — at the Super Bowl Halftime Show. In 2022, Interscope Films also released Selena Gomez's soul-baring Apple+ special, *My Mind & Me*; Olivia Rodrigo's Disney+ road-trip documentary, *Driving Home 2 U*, and Machine Gun Kelly's Hulu special, *Life in Pink*. Berman says the division "is another important platform from which we can work with our amazing artists." Finally, BTS' *Proof* finished at No. 3 in total album sales, and Kendrick Lamar and Blackpink released No. 1 Billboard 200 albums. —S.K.

JANICK: RICH POLK. BERMAN: COURTESY OF IGA.

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

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2023
billboard
Power 100

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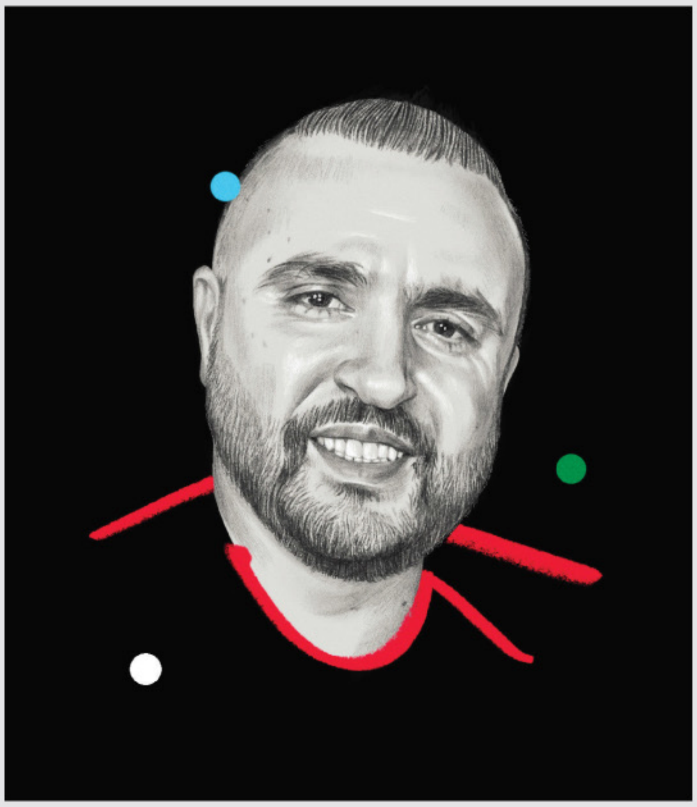


THE TOP 30 23

Wassim “Sal” Slaiby

FOUNDER/CEO
SALXCO/XO

Slaiby worked hard for The Weeknd in 2022, and the returns were well worth it. His management client’s North American stadium tour grossed $131.1 million and sold almost 905,000 tickets — the No. 10 tour of last year. (The tour is currently wending its way through Europe and South America.) The Weeknd and another SALXCO client, Swedish House Mafia, headlined Coachella, then teamed up on “Nothing Is Lost (You Give Me Strength)” for the hit film *Avatar: The Way of Water*. Client Doja Cat’s album *Planet Her*, released in mid-2021, landed its second No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Pop Airplay chart in February with “Need To Know.” She topped the list again with the Post Malone collaboration “I Like You (A Happier Song)” and even without a new album in 2022 finished the year at No. 6 on *Billboard*’s Top Artists chart. XO Records signed its first (and only) female artist, Chxrry22, who released *The Other Side EP*, and NAV’s *Demons Protected by Angels* debuted at No. 1 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums. SALXCO has nearly doubled its staff to handle a roster that has grown to more than 50 artists, including Diddy, Bebe Rexha, Ty Dolla $ign, French Montana, M.I.A. and Metro Boomin. —E.D.M.

1.3 million tickets sold. To close out the year, Messina Touring Group placed Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour on sale, which *Billboard* estimates will make her the highest-grossing female touring artist of all time solely from her U.S. dates. “This industry has been my passion and my lifeblood for over 50 years,” says Messina. “Seeing it bounce back from nothing into a blockbuster — well, that really meant something to me.”

06

Paul Gongaware
John Meglen
CO-CEOs
Concerts West

Over the last 18 months, Concerts West helped The Rolling Stones return to the road with North American and European stadium dates despite the loss of drummer Charlie Watts in 2021 and promoted Roger Waters’ This Is Not a Drill Tour for a combined gross of nearly $250 million. Concerts West and parent company AEG Presents exclusively booked the brand-new Resorts World Theatre in Las Vegas with residencies by Katy Perry, Carrie Underwood, Michael Bublé and Luke Bryan. Meglen credits AEG with keeping its staff intact through the pandemic, saying, “They kept and took care of our people well beyond amazing.”

07

Tim Leiweke
CHAIRMAN/CEO

Jessica Koravos
PRESIDENT, OVG INTERNATIONAL

Francesca Bodie
PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Oak View Group

The global venue development, advisory and investment company opened two owned-and-operated arenas — the Moody Center in Austin and the Acrisure Arena in Greater Palm Springs, Calif. — while continuing construction on three North American venues and new buildings in Manchester, England; Cardiff, Wales; and São Paulo. Oak View Group also opened facilities in Savannah, Ga., and Tempe, Ariz., and completed the acquisition of venue management and hospitality company Spectra, which led to the launch of global full-service food and beverage hospitality division OVG360. “We expect to build upon our [mergers and acquisitions] activity” with a slate of new projects in 2023 that Leiweke says will keep him and his daughter Bodie, who is Oak View Group president of business development, on the move.

08

Gregg Perloff
CEO
Another Planet Entertainment

Twenty years after its launch, the Bay Area-based live-event producer puts on a year-round slate of shows and festivals that host crowds from 500 to 75,000. Over the course of nine months in 2021 and 2022, Another Planet Entertainment co-produced two sold-out Outside Lands festivals in San Francisco to make up for pandemic downtime, a fallow period during which, Perloff says, “we kept our full-time staff on full salary.” The company also orchestrated large-scale festivals, co-producing Life Is Beautiful and producing the debut California edition of Breakaway, and sold a total of 1.5 million tickets for its venues and festival sites in California and Nevada.

09

Pasquale Rotella
FOUNDER/CEO
Insomniac Events

In the past year, the Los Angeles-based Insomniac produced over 40 festivals, 200 concerts and 1,500 club nights, which drew a total of 7 million fans, Rotella says. Insomniac Music Group released 800 tracks in 2022, up 49% from the previous year, and in December the promoter returned to a former venue, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, with Kx5’s first headlining show. In 2023, the company will launch a festival cruise, EDSea, and a temporary, festival-themed Hotel EDC in Las Vegas. Despite these accomplishments, says Rotella, “still being here is our brightest highlight of them all. This year marks 30 years of Insomniac, and we could not be more humbled and grateful.”

AGENCIES

01

Rob Light
MANAGING PARTNER/HEAD OF WORLDWIDE TOURING
CAA

See story, page 110.

02

Marty Diamond
EXECUTIVE VP/MANAGING EXECUTIVE, NEW YORK

Brent Smith
EXECUTIVE VP/MANAGING EXECUTIVE, LOS ANGELES

Corrie Martin
EXECUTIVE VP/MANAGING EXECUTIVE, ENCINITAS

James Whitting
EXECUTIVE VP/MANAGING EXECUTIVE, LONDON
Wasserman Music

“We’re looking ahead to another giant year,” says Diamond, noting that Wasserman Music’s agents booked the most acts at Coachella 2023 — including headliner Frank Ocean and Calvin Harris

SLAIBY ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: FRAZER HARRISON/WIREIMAGE

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

WHAT A YEAR

NOAH ASSAD

THE FIRST LATINO TO BE

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

THANKS FOR INSPIRING US EVERYDAY RIMAS

— and teed up big tours by Ed Sheeran, SZA and Imagine Dragons. In 2022, the agency's first full year since acquiring Paradigm, Wasserman's roster of road-conquering acts included Coldplay, Billie Eilish and Kenny Chesney, who had the top country tour, according to Billboard Boxscore's end-of-year ranking. The agency also secured branding deals for its artist clients, including Kendrick Lamar's tour presale for Cash App users and Blake Shelton's Lands' End clothing line. In April, the company boosted its global client roster and European footprint by acquiring Paradigm's London-based business, which brought Whitting into the fold.

03

Scott Clayton
Samantha Kirby Yoh
David Zedeck
CO-HEADS, GLOBAL MUSIC
UTA

Clayton says the company's Latin division made "major strides" with the record-breaking success of Bad Bunny's stadium tour, along with live and brand work for stars Anitta, Karol G and Romeo Santos. He adds that UTA is "very excited" about its momentum in the country space, thanks to new signings such as Tyler Hubbard, who joins a roster that includes Dolly Parton and Toby Keith. The agency, whose clients were nominated for almost 100 Grammy Awards in total, also made over a dozen key hires across its London, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Nashville offices.

04

Lucy Dickins
GLOBAL HEAD OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND TOURING

Kirk Sommer
GLOBAL CO-HEAD OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND TOURING

Jay Williams
CO-HEAD, WME NASHVILLE
WME

In August, Dickins became the first woman to lead a talent agency's music division when she was promoted to global head of contemporary music and touring. Last year, WME also added Snoop Dogg, Lil Baby, Meek Mill and J Balvin to its roster; brokered branding deals for Selena Gomez, Camila Cabello, Kid Cudi and Solange; and booked over 40,000 engagements, including 4,000-plus festival slots and headline arena and stadium tours for Pearl Jam, The Killers, Bruno Mars, Dua Lipa, Tool and Rage Against the Machine.

05

Dennis Arfa
CHAIRMAN
Marsha Vlasic
PRESIDENT
Adam Kornfeld
PRESIDENT OF NORTH AMERICAN TOURING
Artist Group International

AGI's piano man, Billy Joel, who is slated to play the 89th show of his Madison Square Garden residency in March, has sold more than 1.5 million tickets and grossed over $182 million since his monthly concerts launched in 2014. Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe's 36-date stadium tour grossed over $173 million, and the year ahead is looking good as well. Metallica's 2023-24 North American tour has sold more than 1 million tickets. New signings in 2022 included Pantera, Noel Gallagher, Limp Bizkit, Paris Jackson and Jane's Addiction, which joined fellow AGI client Smashing Pumpkins on a joint North American tour last fall (though the former had to sit out five dates after frontman Perry Farrell suffered an injury).

FINANCE

01

Qasim Abbas
SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR

David Kestnbaum
SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, PRIVATE EQUITY GROUP
Blackstone

See story, page 112.

02

Martha Henderson
EXECUTIVE VP/HEAD OF ENTERTAINMENT DIVISION

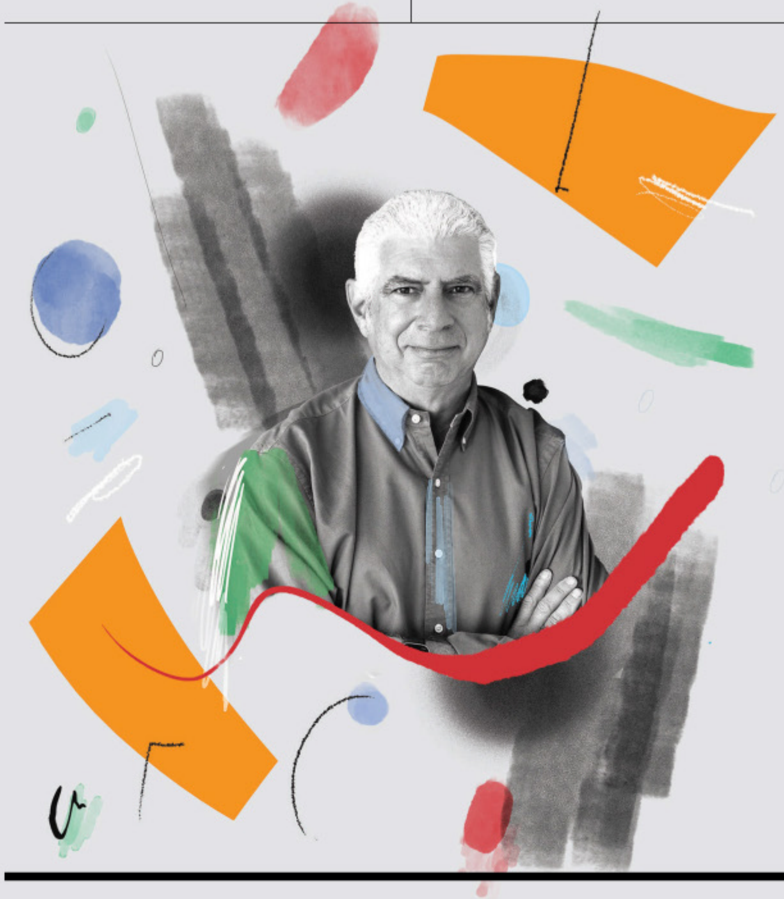
Denise Colletta
SENIOR VP/TEAM LEADER, ENTERTAINMENT DIVISION
City National Bank

In October 2021, City National Bank, which provides debt in music asset transactions among other financial services for the music industry, was the lead arranger and sole bookrunner for Hipgnosis' new revolving credit facility, which makes available $700 million with commitments from a consortium of banks. In other accomplishments, Henderson and Colletta note that their CEO, Kelly Coffey, won the diversity, inclusion and equity CEO of the year award from the *Los Angeles Business Journal* and *Forbes* has twice cited the bank as one of "America's Best Employers for Women."

03

Sherrese Clarke Soares
FOUNDER/CEO
HarbourView Equity Partners

Since Clarke Soares launched HarbourView in October 2021, the company has acquired over 50 music catalogs, including that of Latin superstar and "Despacito" co-writer Luis Fonsi, Usher's stake in RBMG Records (which houses Justin Bieber's recorded-master catalog), country group Lady A and Sum 41 singer-songwrit-



THE TOP 30
24

Rob Light

MANAGING PARTNER/HEAD OF WORLDWIDE TOURING
CAA

In June, CAA finalized a deal to acquire ICM Partners for a reported $750 million, adding 425 new employees to the agency's staff. The music department of this newly formed behemoth repped eight acts that finished in the top 20 Billboard Boxscore tours of 2022: Harry Styles, The Weeknd, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Dua Lipa, Lady Gaga, the Eagles, Justin Bieber and My Chemical Romance. Styles, The Weeknd and the Chili Peppers made the top 10 with a combined $522 million in ticket sales across 121 shows.

The latter two acts were among more than a dozen new clients to join the agency since 2020, Light says, including Grupo Firme, John Mayer, Maroon 5, Arcade Fire, Zac Brown, Mariah Carey, Stevie Nicks, The Black Keys, The 1975, Janet Jackson and Mumford & Sons.

He adds that the agency's stellar year was due to a team effort that included the leadership of colleagues Mitch Rose, Darryl Eaton, Rick Roskin and Emma Banks, as well as the artists and their teams. "That has moved the needle," says Light. "CAA is not one agent locked in a room trying to spin all these plates. You've got people around you, like marketing groups and sponsorship groups and branding groups, that are helping you at the same time, all to push that agenda forward." —TAYLOR MIMS

COURTESY OF CAA

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

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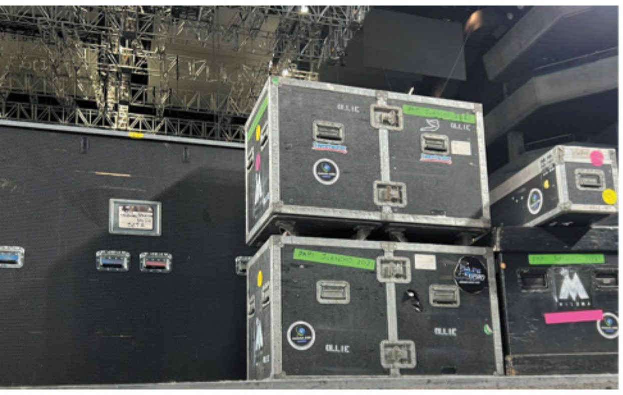

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THE TOP 30

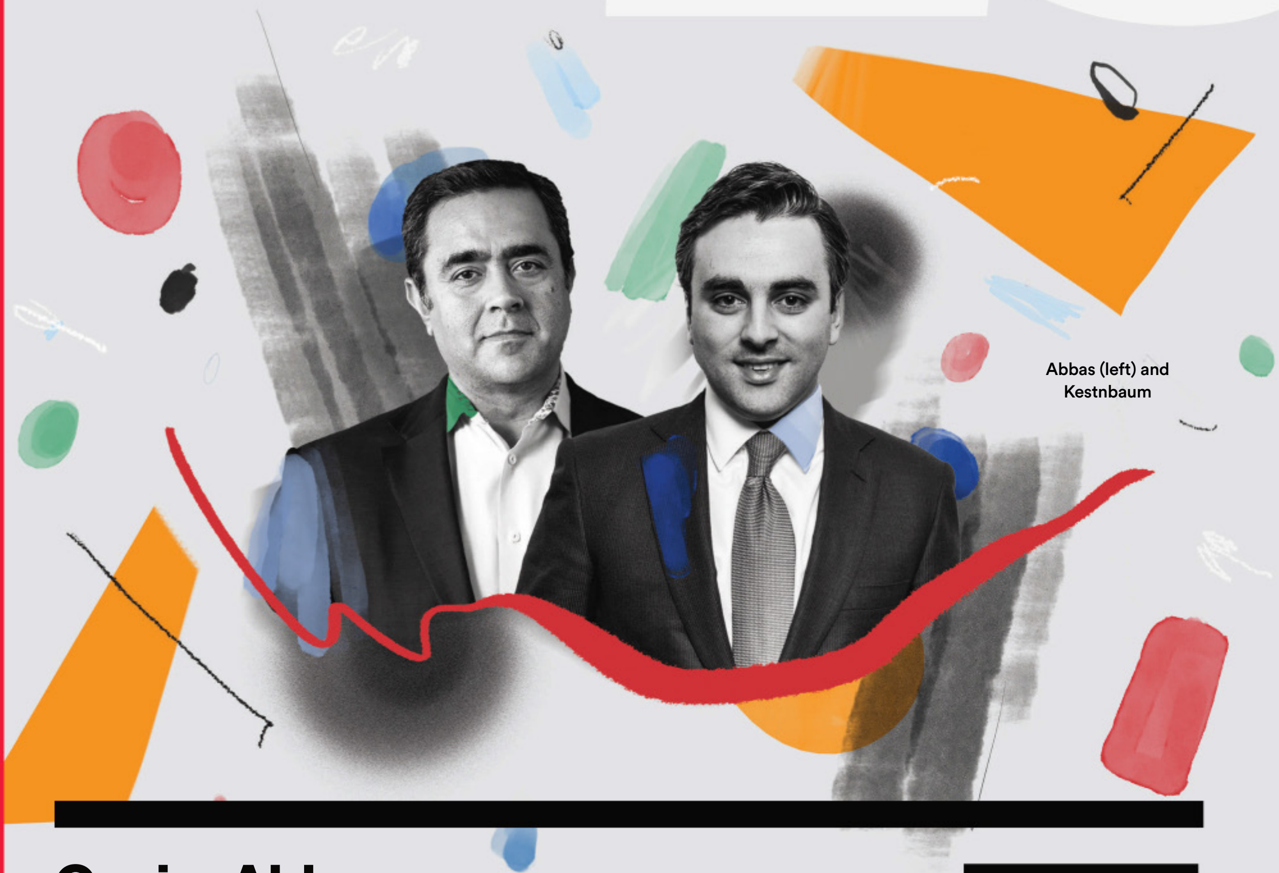
25

Noah Assad

FOUNDER/CEO

RIMAS ENTERTAINMENT

SEE STORY, PAGE 66.



Abbas (left) and Kestnbaum

Qasim Abbas

SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR

David Kestnbaum

SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, PRIVATE EQUITY GROUP

BLACKSTONE

THE TOP 30

26

The global investment company has become a formidable financial player in the music industry, with $950 billion in assets under management, by spending an estimated $2.5 billion using a two-pronged approach. In 2021, Abbas backed Hipgnosis Song Management with $1 billion in funding for song and artist royalty and rights ownership acquisitions — which has become a traditional approach to investing in the music business — while Kestnbaum spent another $1.5 billion to acquire performing rights organization SESAC in 2017 and eOne Music (since renamed MNRK) in 2021, a common private equity practice, albeit one that so far is unconventional in the music industry.

In London, the Abbas-led Blackstone partnership with Hipgnosis has already spent "$600 million," he says, to buy catalogs, income streams or both from such acts as Justin Bieber, a $200 million acquisition; Justin Timberlake, Nile Rodgers, Kenny Chesney and Nelly Furtado, as well as the estate of Leonard Cohen. Blackstone also took a stake in the Hipgnosis Song Management operation, which has led to upgrades in its asset-management systems and methodologies. And in New York, Kestnbaum says, his team has "worked closely with SESAC Music Group chairman/CEO John Josephson and its management to drive growth and equity value creation across a variety of business units and revenue streams, while integrating MNRK and production music leader Audio Network under the PRO." Kestnbaum also says that Blackstone's investment in Candle Media is funding the expansion of that company's Moonbug division into a leading young children's music streaming platform.

And in summer 2022, SESAC and Hipgnosis raised $335 million and $220 million, respectively, through bond offerings. —E.C.

er Deryck Whibley. Calling her asset management firm "a dream many years in the making," Clarke Soares officially opened HarbourView's Newark, N.J., headquarters in December 2022, calling the event "a measure of our conviction to contribute to the city's cultural plans addressing social challenges through the arts." She adds, "I'm proud of our ability to challenge ourselves daily to defy conventional wisdom, which I believe allows us to see opportunities that others do not yet see."

04

Jennifer Box

PARTNER/CO-HEAD, STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS GROUP

KKR

In the fourth quarter of 2021, KKR pulled off one of the biggest music industry deals of the last two years when it established Chord Partners alongside Dundee Partners to acquire Kobalt Capital Fund II for $1.1 billion. Then, in early 2022, the private equity giant almost topped itself when it securitized those music assets with a $730 million bond offering. The firm's ambitious move into the music asset business also included joining with BMG for acquisitions, including the music rights of ZZ Top and a stake in John Legend's publishing. "Music royalties have continued to experience momentum from an array of areas, including the continued growth of streaming and positive developments such as the new rates announced by the [Copyright Royalty Board]," Box says. "At KKR, we've also continued to invest in technology and media platforms that are helping to expand the reach of music in innovative ways," she adds. "Combining royalties with broad-based institutional capital is helping rights owners cement lasting value for their assets and also has exciting implications for the entire music industry."

05

Andy Moats

EXECUTIVE VP/DIRECTOR OF MUSIC, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Pinnacle Financial Partners

Pinnacle Financial Partners' reputation as a major player in music finance grew in 2022 with the addition of an Atlanta office, deeper relationships with electronic music and rock labels, and a greater international presence. Notably, nearly half of the Nashville-based company's new label and publishing clients acquired last year are headquartered outside the United States. "Despite rising interest rates and growing economic uncertainty, Pinnacle provided a record-setting amount of capital to the music industry in 2022, issuing nearly

ABBAS: COURTESY OF NIBC BANK. KESTNBAUM: COURTESY OF BLACKSTONE.

ILLUSTRATION BY SELMAN HOŞGÖR

CONGRATULATIONS

WALTER KOLM

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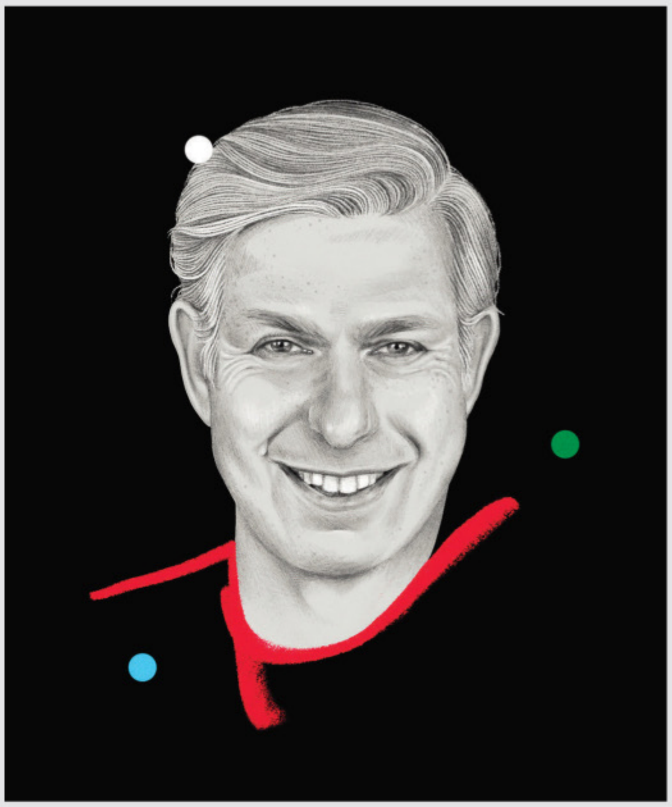

THE TOP 30

27

Scott Pascucci

CEO

CONCORD

In 2022, Concord laid down building blocks for its future by releasing a $1.8 billion asset-backed securitization offering of music rights that included over 1 million copyrights. The move came in a year that also included the purchase of Genesis' publishing and recorded-music catalog as well as the solo work of band members Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford and Tony Banks; expansion into Australasia — through the acquisition of publisher Native Tongue and the subsequent creation of Concord Music Publishing ANZ — and West Africa through the signing of Nigerian Afrobeats star Davido and a joint venture with Immensum Music. "We are determined to capitalize on our past success and to continue the journey that we have been on for the past 10 years," says Pascucci. "We have created something very special at Concord, a different kind of music company that will continue for years to come." —MELINDA NEWMAN

FOR FELLOW 2023 BILLBOARD POWER LIST HONOREES, SEE PAGE 84.

$1 billion in new loan commitments to music publishers and record labels all over the world," says Moats.

06

David Dunn

CO-FOUNDER/MANAGING PARTNER

Shot Tower Capital

As the music acquisition market heated up, Dunn solidified his status as one of the industry's key dealmakers. In 2022, Shot Tower advised on three of *Billboard*'s 10 largest music deals of 2022, including HarborView Equity Partners' acquisition of SoundHouse's recorded-music assets and Concord's purchase of the publishing and recorded-music catalogs of Genesis and the solo work of band members Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford and Tony Banks. "The firm successfully closed 100% of its engaged transactions for the year with total transaction volume in excess of $1 billion," says Dunn, who still represents the Michael Jackson estate on all investment banking and corporate finance matters.

07

Fred Davis

PARTNER

The Raine Group

The music investment and advisory team at The Raine Group continued its steady, quiet work fueling music's biggest business deals in 2022. Davis, along with Joe Puthenveetil and Rob Frech, served as advisers to Francisco Partners in their acquisition of Kobalt, as well as to former Apple Music global creative director Larry Jackson, Quality Control Music and DJ and music production software maker Serato. Davis says the year also brought notable successes from SoundCloud, Amuse and Firebird, all companies in which Raine Group is invested and Davis or another of the team advises. He says Raine Group remains focused on its mission of working worldwide "to help leading music entrepreneurs achieve their vision."

08

Matt Pincus

CO-FOUNDER/CEO

MUSIC

Entrepreneur-investor Pincus had a watershed year. In April, Pincus, along with LionTree, closed $200 million in equity financing to form MUSIC, a long-term holding company that invests in a variety of music enterprises. It was his next major move after selling his indie publishing company, SONGS, in 2018. "It's a dream to support the people building the next generation of great companies," he says. "I try to be the investor I wish I had when I was building my business." In the months since founding MUSIC, Pincus has spent $80 million in investments. This includes the acquisition of Kobalt (which he calls "the great at-scale independent of our time") alongside Francisco Partners, investment in label LVRN ("one of the best independent companies in music") and additional investments in Splice, the music creation/sampling company, and ticketing app Dice.

LEGAL

01

Kenny Meiselas

NAMED PARTNER/HEAD OF THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Joe Brenner

PARTNER

Grubman Shire Meiselas

Over the past two years, Meiselas and Brenner have played leading roles in some of the industry's biggest deals. In 2021, Brenner served as the self-described "point guard" for the legal team that brokered the David Bowie estate's sale of the iconic artist's publishing for $250 million, Bruce Springsteen's $500 million sale of his publishing and master recordings to Sony Music and Sting's sale of his song catalog to Universal Music Publishing Group for $360 million — deals that were all announced in 2022. And last year, Meiselas and the firm's music department negotiated deals for some of 2022's biggest tours, including The Weeknd and Lady Gaga's stadium outings, arena tours for Lizzo (with Grubman Shire Meiselas partner Grace Kim) and Chris Brown, Usher's recently extended Las Vegas residency and Springsteen and The E Street band's 2023 return to the road. The firm also repped The Weeknd in connection with his upcoming HBO series, *The Idol*; Gaga's role as Harley Quinn in the 2024 sequel to Todd Phillips' *The Joker*; and Lizzo's Emmy-winning Amazon Prime show, *Lizzo's Watch Out for the Big Grrrls*. The firm capped the year with founding partner Allen Grubman's induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

02

Don Passman

PARTNER

Gang Tyre Ramer

Gang Tyre Ramer's clients include Taylor Swift, Adele and Elton John, all of whom had banner years: Swift's *Midnights* earned over 3 million album-equivalent units, while Adele's "Easy on Me" continued to dominate radio (top 10 in overall audience impressions in 2022) and John polished off the U.S. leg of his retirement tour with three dates at Los Angeles' Dodger Stadium. Swift also announced a massive live run, which requires her legal team to sign off on a heap of contracts, from the promoter all the way to the bus company. On top of that, the firm's clients landed 13 total Grammy nominations in 2022 — a feat that Passman calls "pretty extraordinary" — and the practice expanded by adding a pair of new attorneys. Students of the music industry will also be excited to hear that Passman has begun work on the next edition of his canonical text, *All You Need To Know About the Music Business*.

PASCUCCI ILLUSTRATION REFERENCE PHOTO: STACIE HUCKEBA

ILLUSTRATION BY NAYA-CHEYENNE

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2023 billboard

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MALUMA

Mallory (left) and Perry

03

Christine Lepera

CO-CHAIR, ENTERTAINMENT AND IP LITIGATION GROUP

Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp

Lepera is a go-to litigator for top creators facing copyright lawsuits, and her past clients have included Drake and Jay-Z. She's gearing up to rep Post Malone this spring in a trial over a songwriting co-credit for his 2019 hit "Circles." And Dua Lipa hired her last year to handle two high-profile cases over her 2020 smash "Levitating." Lepera's biggest recent victory came in March, when she fended off a copyright case over Katy Perry's 2013 chart-topper "Dark Horse" — and set a precedential opinion issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. "It expressly recognizes that music creators need the breathing room to create with music building blocks and commonplace expression cannot be monopolized," Lepera says of the decision for Perry. "That is a victory for the creation of music itself."

04

Peter Anderson

PARTNER

Davis Wright Tremaine

Anderson, who has represented The Weeknd, Zac Brown, Green Day, Gwen Stefani and other acts, handled two of the biggest music copyright cases in recent memory, winning a landmark ruling for Led Zeppelin in 2020 over "Stairway to Heaven" and, in December, negotiating a resolution to the five-year-long copyright battle against his client Taylor Swift regarding the lyrics to "Shake It Off." In December, he also won a high-profile victory for Cardi B in a case about the use of a man's tattoo on the cover of her 2016 mixtape, *Gangsta Bitch Music Vol. 1*, and secured a key ruling in a long-running dispute over the rights to Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love."

05

Lisa Alter

PARTNER

Alter Kendrick & Baron

Alter's firm has handled music acquisition

THE TOP 30

28

Ron Perry

CHAIRMAN/CEO

Jenifer Mallory

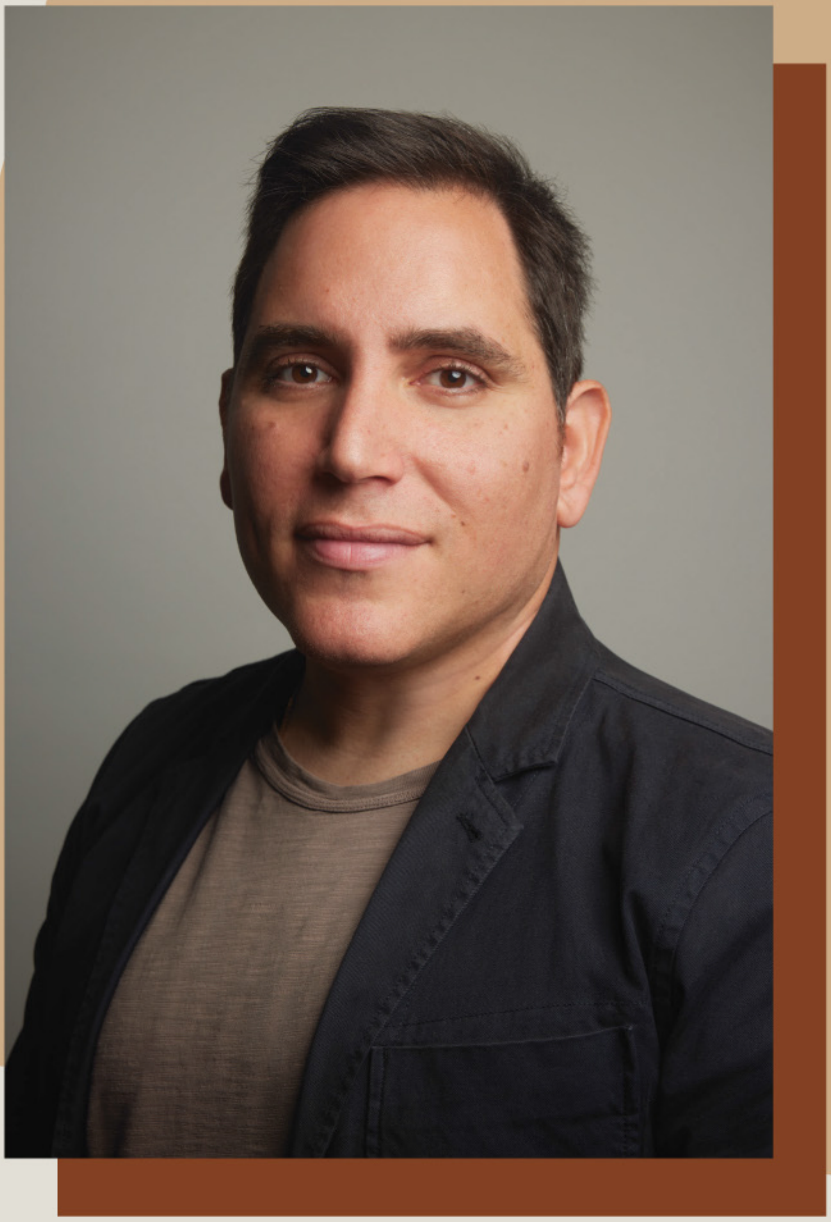
EXECUTIVE VP/GM

COLUMBIA RECORDS

After a year in which the label logged 25 weeks at No. 1 on the Hot 100 and ended 2022 as *Billboard*'s Top Radio Songs Label, Columbia may have its biggest victory lap ahead at the Grammys (Feb. 5), where its artists Adele, Harry Styles and Beyoncé will vie for awards in the marquee categories; together, they have a total of 22 nominations. The Kid LAROI's and Lil Nas X's respective Hot 100 chart-toppers "Stay" (with Justin Bieber) and "Industry Baby" (with Jack Harlow) kept the label's radio success rolling well into 2023. And TikTok stars Nicky Youre ("Sunroof"), Megan Moroney ("Tennessee Orange") and Yahritza y Su Esencia ("Soy el Unico") have signed with the label for their next acts. "What we do is we help an artist amplify and help an artist build a world," says Mallory — Columbia's global marketing expert — of the label's "artist-first" approach. Perry, who is lauded in-house for his A&R acumen, adds, "We're just constantly understanding what's going on [in the business], and as the landscape evolves, we're able to be there and give [our artists] support across all sorts of different facets." —A.U.

AARON RICHTER

DOWNTOWN



Downtown Music Holdings congratulates 2023 Billboard Power List honorees

Justin Kalifowitz, Executive Chair
Andrew Bergman, Chief Executive Officer

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downtownmusic.com

DAMON CASAREZ

THE TOP 30

29

Ron Bension

PRESIDENT/CEO

ASM GLOBAL

In the last 18 months, ASM Global opened the Capital One Hall outside of Washington, D.C., and the $70 million esports/concert venue Tech Port in San Antonio, adding to the company's portfolio of 350-plus facilities that it owns or operates — or both — around the globe. The venue giant, which resulted from the 2019 merger of AEG Facilities and SMG, also landed 17 new management clients, including the Olympia convention center in London, and is more than halfway through one of the largest recreational construction projects in the world: the 69-acre Kai Tak Sports Park in Hong Kong. Bension says the company has had its best revenue year to date, as well as individual venues reporting record years. "We put the full force of our corporate resources to bear in order for [our clients] to succeed," he says, adding that ASM quadrupled the size of its content acquisition team and doubled the size of its corporate sponsor, global partner and marketing divisions. That growth came despite the COVID-19 Omicron variant wiping out months of events at the beginning of 2022. Conventions, a large part of ASM Global's business, have still not returned to pre-pandemic levels, Bension says. "When you have the ability to examine metrics across such a broad variety of venues, you can see where the opportunities are," he says. "We make money when our clients make money." —T.M.

deals involving James Brown, Whitney Houston, Gerry Goffin and Bing Crosby — and that's just over the past 18 months. Since what Alter calls the "gold rush" for music catalogs started in 2018, she says her firm has completed more than 200 deals totaling over $6 billion in total value, including a blockbuster deal in which Primary Wave Music Publishing bought a stake in Stevie Nicks' catalog. All that work requires savvy in negotiation and drafting contracts, but Alter prides herself on also being able to offer clients "in-depth legal analysis founded in principles of domestic and international copyright law."

06

John Branca

PARTNER/HEAD OF THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Ziffren Brittenham

PRESIDENT

MJJ Productions

CO-EXECUTOR

The Michael Jackson estate

Nearly 14 years after Jackson's death, the King of Pop still reigns on Broadway, thanks in large part to Branca, who is a co-executor of Jackson's estate and one of three lead producers of *MJ: The Musical*. "I was proud of Myles Frost [who plays Jackson] winning the Tony Award for best performance by a leading actor in a musical in 2022, as he and the rest of the cast continue to perform for sold-out houses," says Branca, whose team also completed the financing and distribution deal with Lionsgate for a forthcoming Jackson biopic, represented the Elvis Presley estate in negotiating licenses for Baz Luhrmann's *Elvis* and repped Primary Wave in the acquisition of the James Brown estate and catalog.

RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

01

Elizabeth Matthews

CEO

ASCAP

Under Matthews' leadership, the PRO generated a record $1.3 billion in revenue

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THE TOP 30

30

Brad Navin

CEO

Colleen Theis

PRESIDENT/COO

THE ORCHARD

Thanks to a combination of savvy partnerships with Rimas Entertainment and G*59 Records, the labels behind streaming powerhouses Bad Bunny and $uicideboy$, respectively, and a presence in fast-growing global subgenres such as the electronic style phonk — which has become increasingly popular in Eastern Europe — The Orchard grew its current market share from 5.6% in 2021 to an impressive 7.1% in 2022. “Our strategy has always been to deliver local music globally — music from anywhere can have value everywhere,” says Navin. “Last year marked our 25th anniversary, and that coincided with also being the most successful year in the company’s history.”

More companies are offering distribution deals and preaching a global approach. How has increased competition affected your business?

BRAD NAVIN Competition is good. We don’t want to be complacent. But we won’t do bad deals. We do deals that sustain our partners and their artists’ careers as well as the company. We’re always asking ourselves, “Is that real competition, or somebody chasing market share, or an exit while the music’s in a frothy financial place?”

What do you think is the biggest challenge the music industry will face in 2023?

COLLEEN THEIS We all know there’s a staggering amount of music being released globally every day. Attention spans are short, and the [choices are] overwhelming. We’re rising to the challenge by helping our labels and artists build and solidify their fan bases, using creativity and technology to harness moments and create lasting, loyal relationships that help artists thrive.

Sony Music Group chairman Rob Stringer said last year that The Orchard was an important part of a strategy of having “a bigger proportion of the net that’s being cast for content” at a time when so much music is released daily. How do you balance quantity with quality?

NAVIN The Orchard has over 46 offices around the world. And deal flow is as high or higher than ever before. What we’ve seen over the last 25 years is that the kids are out there listening to what they want, where they want, how they want. We’ve got tremendous capability through our supply chain, our technology, our great employees [and] our great label partners to meet that demand. —E.L.

Theis (left) and Navin photographed by DeSean McClinton-Holland on Jan. 10 at The Orchard in New York.

in 2021 and, for the first time, earned over $1 billion from U.S.-licensed performances. More importantly, growth slowed but didn't decline during the pandemic. "We did this while managing a world-class, fully cloud-based technology infrastructure, adding services for our members and proving that as the only not-for-profit PRO in the U.S., we can deliver industry-leading innovation and record-breaking financial results for music creators," she says. As for the music, in 2022, ASCAP members had the No. 1 songs on 34 separate *Billboard* year-end charts and swept the music categories at the Academy Awards and Golden Globes.

02

Mike O'Neill

PRESIDENT/CEO

BMI

In the fiscal year that ended June 30, BMI's revenue grew 16% to $1.6 billion, and the PRO distributed a record $1.5 billion to its member songwriters, composers and publishers. But the most notable accomplishment of the year was a legal and organizational maneuver: A nonprofit operation since its founding in 1939, BMI became a for-profit business. "This opens up new and important opportunities for us to invest in our business in ways we weren't able to do before," says O'Neill, "ensuring we are well-positioned for the future and can continue to deliver on our mission to support our songwriters, composers and publishers, and grow the value of their music."

03

Jeremy Sirota

CEO

Merlin

Merlin went deeper into expansion mode in 2022 with new partnerships aimed at giving its growing membership — 46 independent labels and distributors were added — more ways to boost revenue and payouts to artists, as well as audience. Under Sirota, Merlin spent its 14th year adding reach in visual discovery (Pinterest), livestreaming (Twitch), fitness (Supernatural) and nearly a dozen other services. The global digital rights organization also boosted member opportunities internationally through deals with streaming and social media platforms Boomplay in Africa, JioSaavn in India and Kuaishou in China. "The independent music from Merlin members serves as the global soundtrack in people's daily lives around the world," says Sirota.

> **"We are younger, and we are more diverse. We have achieved a 20% increase in women; a 38% increase in people of color; a 100% increase in Black members. After years of listening, learning and putting in the work, we're beginning to see the results of our efforts to diversify the academy's membership."**
>
> —HARVEY MASON JR., RECORDING ACADEMY

ASSOCIATIONS

01

David Israelite

PRESIDENT/CEO

National Music Publishers' Association

The NMPA's big win this year was the settlement of the Copyright Royalty Board rate-setting case Phonorecords IV, which determines mechanical streaming royalties for the years 2023 to 2027. The agreement locks in royalties starting at 15.1% of music streaming service revenue (unless a per-subscriber rate or a percentage of label revenue is higher), and they will rise from there — "the highest rates in the world and the highest rates in history," says Israelite. And as both the number of subscribers and, in some cases, the subscription fee each one pays rises, "each year will be the biggest revenue pool in history." The NMPA also worked with songwriters to solidify a policy on copyright termination. Up next, says Israelite, is "our fight with Twitter," which doesn't pay royalties on the music it uses. The battle "is going to reach a boiling point."

02

Mitch Glazier

CHAIRMAN/CEO

RIAA

As the U.S. recorded-music business keeps growing, the RIAA continues to reinforce the copyright protections on which its label members depend. One highlight: A jury found internet service provider Grande Communications liable for almost $47 million in damages for willful copyright infringement for failing to prevent piracy. (Grande is appealing.) The organization also took steps to shape policy around music created by artificial intelligence and helped push a California law that prevents courts from using rappers' lyrics as evidence against them in criminal cases, with lobbying in other states to follow.

03

Harvey Mason Jr.

CEO

The Recording Academy

"I say this humbly, but the Recording Academy is a transformed organization," Mason says of the organization behind the Grammy Awards. "We are more open and transparent than ever before. Our staff and membership are more diverse and reflective of the music community than in years past. We hit major milestones and made amazing progress in advocacy, membership and awards." Mason points to the academy's work in advocating for pro-music legislation including the HITS Act, the PEACE Through Music Diplomacy Act, the American Music Fairness Act and the RAP Act. The organization recently welcomed its fourth new-member class since transitioning to a community-driven and peer-reviewed annual membership cycle. "We are younger, and we are more diverse. We have achieved a 20% increase in women; a 38% increase in people of color; a 100% increase in Black members. After years of listening, learning and putting in the work, we're beginning to see the results of our efforts to diversify the academy's membership." b

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METHODOLOGY Nominations for *Billboard*'s executive lists open no less than 120 days in advance of publication, and a link is sent to press representatives by request before the nomination period. (Please email thom.duffy@billboard.com for an editorial calendar and inclusion on the email list for links.) *Billboard* editors and beat reporters choose the industry sectors to be included on each list, the most significant companies within each sector and the maximum number of honorees per company. In choosing honorees, editors weigh a variety of factors including, but not limited to, nominations by peers, colleagues and superiors. For the Power 100, we considered the impact of honorees and their companies on consumer behavior, as measured by year-end *Billboard* charts, sales and streaming performance; market share; revenue, or where not available, *Billboard* revenue estimates, which may be aided by company guidance; and social media impressions; and radio audiences reached, using data available as of Dec. 31, 2022. Career trajectory was also considered. Where required, U.S. record-label market share was consulted using Luminate's current market share for albums, plus track-equivalent and streaming-equivalent album consumption units and *Billboard*'s quarterly top 10 publisher rankings. Unless otherwise noted, Billboard Boxscore and Luminate are the sources for tour grosses and sales/streaming data, respectively. Luminate is also the source for radio audience metrics. The source for radio metrics is monitored station airplay from Mediabase provided by Luminate.

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Mike Weissman, Eliah Seton and Lauren Wirtzer-Seawood

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No. 22

PEAK ON *BILLBOARD'S* MAINSTREAM TOP 40 CHART

Charlieonnafriday photographed by Michelle Genevieve Gonzales on Jan. 23 in Los Angeles.

CHARLIEONNAFRIDAY

How the singer-rapper relied on TikTok releases before breaking through with "Enough"

In early 2022, charlieonnafriday had just recorded the last song for his debut project and was about to drive away when his producer Tyler Dopps called. "He was like, 'There's one more thing we have to do before you leave,' " the 19-year-old artist recalls. Dopps played a languid loop as the singer-rapper wrote the lyrics that ultimately served as the chorus to his pop-leaning breakup track "Enough" into his phone. Though the song wasn't ready to make the independently released project *Onnafriday*, out in April 2022, he stashed it away. A couple of months later, while driving to Los Angeles from his native Seattle with a friend, charlieonnafriday played the song and belted its refrain, all of which his friend filmed and posted to TikTok. It not only went viral but became his breakthrough hit — two things he had been building toward since childhood.

Born Charlie Finch, he began uploading vlogs to YouTube at 8 years old and developed an interest in music along the way. In the eighth grade, he joined his friend's older brother in a home studio, and the two steadily stockpiled "hundreds of songs." But after a break, the pandemic spurred charlieonnafriday to pick the craft back up on his own. He leaned on YouTube tutorials to teach him mixing and production and traded in the trap drums that grounded his early music for more melodic beats, creating a pop-rap hybrid. He "started flooding TikTok" with snippets of songs and at the start of 2021, he made his first significant splash when he teased the intoxicating "After Hours." The song caught the attention of co-manager Geoff Ogunlesi, CEO of The Ogunlesi Group, as well as a host of record labels. Charlieonnafriday signed with Island Records in June 2022, swayed by the "family vibe," he says, adding, "I knew that Island would put in a lot of effort. Labels are amazing for dumping gas on a flame."

Yet, "Enough" still didn't have more than a chorus at that point — and charlieonnafriday started feeling the pressure as it took off online. He recalls his team's mentality with a laugh: " 'Get [co-writer] Club 97, Tyler [Dopps] and Charlie in a room and finish it, because there are videos with 5 million views on a song that's not done.' " It arrived at long last in early August and soon translated to the airwaves, fueled by a radio promotional run set up by the label. "At the end of the day, a lot of life is built on relationships," says Ogunlesi. "Nothing beats meeting people, winning them over [and] having programmers that are fans." By November, "Enough" debuted on *Billboard*'s Mainstream Top 40 chart, where it has reached a No. 22 high on the Jan. 28-dated chart.

Having recently moved to L.A. — where charlieonnafriday lives in a house "full of the same homies I started with" — the rising artist began the year with a 10-date college tour that wraps in February. He'll then head overseas, playing to some of the biggest crowds of his career and opening for his hometown hero Macklemore. And though hesitant on announcing a release date, he's planning to drop a deluxe version of *Onnafriday* later this year. "We're not just trying to build a song, we're trying to build an artist," says Ogunlesi. "It has to extend beyond just one moment." —JOSH GLICKSMAN

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